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WORKS

OF

ORVILLE DEWEY, D.D.

VOL. III.

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PREFACE.

THE Volume, here offered to the public, is designed to give a comprehensive reply to the question, What is Unitarianism? Many persons feel the want of something of this nature; something beyond the brief compass of a Tract, and within the limits of a Volume, which they could give or point out, to those who are asking, "What are your general views of religion? What are your views of the Scriptures, of faith in them, and of the doctrines and principles which they teach?" Such inquirers are often not sufficiently interested to gather the information they seek, from scattered tracts, or to hunt for it through twenty volumes; nor, if they were, is it likely that the tracts or volumes would be within their reach. The present volume will perhaps satisfy the questions, that are already in their minds; and if it raises questions which it does not settle, they must be referred to other sources. In particular, reference may be made, on the Trinity, to Norton's Statement of Reasons; on the Offices of Christ, to Ware's Discourses; on the general subject, to Sparks's Inquiry, Yates's Vindication, Peabody's and Burnap's Lectures, and the Works of Channing; and for our practical views of religion, to the Discourses of Freeman, Buckminster, Thatcher, Abbot, Parker, Cappe and Channing, besides those of many living writers.

One word further the Author may be permitted to say of the manner in which this volume is made up. It consists partly of discourses not before published, and partly of reprints of former publications. Of the latter kind are chiefly two series of papers, entitled "Cursory Observations on the Questions at issue between Orthodox and Liberal Christians;" and "The Analogy of Religion with other subjects."

In short, the Author's purpose, in this volume, has been, in the first place, to offer a very brief summary of the Unitarian Belief; in the next place, to lay down the essential principles of all religious faith; thirdly, to state and defend our construction, as it is generally held among us, of the Christian doctrines; fourthly, to illustrate, by analogy, our views of practical religion; and finally, to present, somewhat at large, the general views entertained among us, of the Scriptures; of the grounds of belief in them; of the nature of their Inspiration; of the New Testament doctrine of Justification by Faith; and of the just Principles of Reasoning in religious inquiry. Under the last head, several Reviews from the Christian Examiner are introduced into the present edition, and two Discourses not before printed. In the last of them, bearing the title "That Errors in Theology have sprung from False Principles of Reasoning," the Author has attempted to show, as far as was compatible with the nature and limits of a popular Discourse, that the prevailing Theology is at war with the true inductive philosophy.

With this brief statement, the volume is submitted to the Reader.

New-York, June, 1846.

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THE UNITARIAN BELIEF.

THE UNITARIAN BELIEF.

I shall undertake to state in this article what I understand to be the prevailing belief of Unitarian Christians. Our position as a religious body seems still to require statements of this nature. It is a position, that is to say, entirely misunderstood. Misconstructions, once in vogue, seem to have a strange power of perpetuating themselves; or, at any rate, they are helped on by powers that seem to us very strange. In the face of a thousand denials, and in spite of the self-contradicting absurdity of the charge, it is still said, and, by multitudes, seems to be thought, that our creed consists of negations; that we believe in almost nothing. It seems to be received as if it were a matter of common consent, that we do not hold to the doctrines of the Bible, and that we scarcely pretend to hold to the Bible itself. It is apparently supposed by many, that we stand upon peculiar ground in this respect; that we hold some strange position in the Christian world, different from all other Christian denominations.

We must, therefore, if our patience fail not, explain ourselves again and again. We must, again and again, implore others to make distinctions very obvious indeed, but which they are strangely slow to see; to distinguish, that is to say, or at least to remember that *we* distinguish, between the Bible and fallible interpretations, between Scripture doctrines and the

explanation of those doctrines. The former we receive; the latter only do we reject.

Our position in the Christian world is not a singular one. We profess to stand upon the same ground as all other Christians, the Bible. Our position, considered as dissent; our position, as assailed on all sides, is by no means a novel one. The Protestants were, and are, charged by the Romish Church with rejecting Christianity. Every sect in succession that has broken off from the body of Christians, the Lutherans and English Episcopalians first, then the Scotch Presbyterians, then the Baptists, the Methodists, the Quakers, the Puritans, the Independents of every name, have been obliged to reply to the same charge of holding no valid nor authorized belief. And what has been the answer of them all? It has been the answer of Paul before Felix; that they did believe; that they "believed all things that are written" in the holy volume.

This same defence, namely, Paul's defence to the Jews, Luther's and Wickliffe's to the Romish Church; the defence of Knox, of Robinson, of Fox, of Wesley, and Whitfield, and of our own Mayhew and Mathers to the English Church; this same defence, it has fallen to our lot to plead as Unitarian Christians. We bear a new name; but we take an old stand; a stand old as Christianity. We bear a new name, but we make an old defence; we think as every other class of Christians have thought, that we approach the nearest to the old primitive Christianity. We bear a hard name, the name of heretics; but it is the very name which Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Arminians, Calvinists, have once borne; which all Protestant Orthodoxy has once borne; which Paul himself bore, when he said, "After the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers." We bear a new name; and

a new name draws suspicion upon it, as every Christian sect has had occasion full well to know; and we think, therefore, that our position and our plea demand some consideration and sympathy from the body of Christians. We think that they ought to listen to us, when we make the plea, once their own, that we believe, according to our honest understanding of their claim upon our faith, all things that are written in the Holy Scriptures.

There is one circumstance which makes the statement of this defence peculiarly pertinent and proper for *us*. And that is, the delicacy which has been felt by our writers and preachers about the use of terms. When we found, for instance, that the phrase, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," and that the words, *atonement*, *regeneration*, *election*, with some others, were appropriated by the popular creeds, and stood in prevailing usage, for orthodox doctrines, we hesitated about the free use of them. It was not because we hesitated about the meaning which Scripture gave to them, but about the meaning which common usage had fixed upon them. We believed in the things themselves; we believed in the words as they stood in the Bible; but not as they stood in other books. But finding that, whenever we used these terms, we were charged, as even our great Master himself was, with "deceiving the people," and not anxious to dispute about words, we gave up the familiar use of a portion of the Scriptural phraseology. Whether we ought, in justice to ourselves, so to have done, is not now the question. We did so; and the consequence has been, that the body of the people, not often hearing from our pulpits the contested words and phrases; not often hearing the words, *propitiation*, *sacrifice*, *the natural man*, *the new birth*, and *the Spirit of God*, hold them

selves doubly warranted in charging us with a defection from the faith of Scripture. It is this state of things, which makes it especially pertinent and proper for us, as we have said, distinctly to declare not only our belief in the Scriptures generally, but our belief in what the Scriptures teach on the points in controversy; our belief, we repeat, in what the Scriptures mean by the phrase, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," and by the words, *atonement*, *conversion*, *election*, and others that stand for disputed doctrines.

To some statements of this nature, then, we now invite attention; only premising further, that it is no part of our purpose, within the brief limits of this exposition, to set forth anything of that abundant argument for our views of Christianity, which so powerfully convinces us that they are true. Our object at present is limited to statement and explanation. We would present the Unitarian creed, according to our own understanding of it.

With this object in view, we say, in general, that we believe in the Scriptures.

On a point which is so plain, and ought to be so well understood as this, it is unnecessary to dwell, unless it be for the purpose of discrimination. If any one thinks it necessary to a reception of the Bible as a revelation from God, that the inspired penmen should have written by immediate dictation; if he thinks that the writers were mere amanuenses, and that word after word was put down by instant suggestion from above; that the very style is divine and not human; that the style, we say, and the matters of style, the figures, the metaphors, the illustrations, came from the Divine mind, and not from human minds; we say, at once and plainly, that we do not regard the Scriptures as setting forth any claims to such super-

natural perfection or accuracy of style. It is not a kind of distinction, that would add anything to the authority, much less to the dignity, of a communication from heaven. Nay, it would detract from its power, to deprive it, by any hypothesis, of those touches of nature, of that natural pathos, simplicity and imagination, and of that solemn grandeur of thought disregarding style, of which the Bible is full. Enough is it for us, that the matter is divine, the doctrines true, the history authentic, the miracles real, the promises glorious, the threatenings fearful. Enough, that all is gloriously and fearfully true; true to the Divine will, true to human nature, true to its wants, anxieties, sorrows, sins and solemn destinies. Enough, that the seal of a divine and miraculous communication is set upon that Holy Book.

So we receive it. So we believe in it. And there is many a record on those inspired pages, which he who believes therein would not exchange; no, he would not exchange it, a simple sentence though it be, for the wealth of worlds.

That God Almighty, the Infinite Creator and Father, hath spoken to the world; that He who speaks indeed, in all the voices of nature and life, but speaks there generally and leaves all to inference; that he hath spoken to man distinctly, and as it were individually—spoken with a voice of interpretation for life's mysteries, and of guidance amidst its errors, and of comfort for its sorrows, and of pardon for its sins, and of hope, undying hope, beyond the grave; this is a fact, compared with which all other facts are not worth believing in; this is an event, so interesting, so transcendent, transporting, sublime, as to leave to all other events the character only of things ordinary and indifferent.

But let us pass from the general truth of this record

to some of its particular doctrines. Our attention here will be confined to the New Testament.

I. And we say, in the first place, that we believe "in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost." This was the simple primitive creed of the Christians; and it were well if men had been content to receive it in its simplicity. As a creed, it was directed to be introduced into the form of baptism. The rite of baptism was appropriated to the profession of Christianity. The converts were to be baptized into the acknowledgment of the Christian religion; "baptized into the name," that is, into the acknowledgment, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

This creed consists of three parts. It contains no proof, nor hint, of the doctrine of a Trinity. We might as well say, that any other three points of belief are one point. The creed consists of three parts; and these parts embrace the grand peculiarities of the Christian religion; and it is for this reason, as we conceive, and for no other, that they are introduced into the primitive form of a profession of Christianity.

The first tenet is, that God is a paternal Being; that he has an interest in his creatures, such as is expressed in the title *Father*; an interest unknown to all the systems of Paganism, untaught in all the theories of philosophy; an interest not only in the glorious beings of other spheres, the sons of light, the dwellers in heavenly worlds, but in us, poor, ignorant and unworthy as we are; that he has pity for the erring, pardon for the guilty, love for the pure, kindness for the humble and promises of immortal and blessed life for those who trust and obey him. God, yes, the God of boundless worlds and infinite systems, is our Father. How many, in Christian lands, have not yet learned this first truth of the Christian faith!

The second article in the Christian's creed is, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;" not God himself, but his image, his brightest manifestation; the teacher of his truth, the messenger of his will; the mediator between God and men; the sacrifice for sin, and the Saviour from it; the conqueror of death, the forerunner into eternity, where he evermore liveth to make intercession for us. We are not about to argue; but we cannot help remarking, as we pass, how obvious it is, that in none of these offices can Jesus be regarded as God. If he *is* God in his *nature*, yet as Mediator between God and man, we say he cannot be *regarded* as God.

The third object of our belief, introduced into the primitive creed, is the Holy Ghost; in other words, that power of God, that divine influence, by which Christianity was established through miraculous aids, and by which its spirit is still shed abroad in the hearts of men. This tenet, as we understand it, requires our belief in miracles, and in gracious interpositions of God, for the support and triumph of Christian faith and virtue.

Let us add, that these three, with the addition of the doctrine of a future life, are the grand points of faith which are set forth in the earliest uninspired creed on record; commonly called "The Apostles' Creed." Its language is, "I believe in God the Father Almighty; and in Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, our Lord; who was born of the Holy Ghost and Virgin Mary; and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and was buried; and, the third day, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth on the right hand of the Father; whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead; and in the Holy Ghost; the

Holy Church; the remission of sins; and the resurrection of the flesh." Not a word is here of "co-equal Son," as in the Nicene Creed; not a word of "Trinity," as in the Athanasian. Things approach nearer, it should seem, to the simplicity of the Gospel, as they approach nearer to its date. To that simplicity of faith, then, we hold fast. On that primitive and beautiful record of doctrine we put our hand and place our reliance. We believe "in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost." May the Father Almighty have mercy upon us! May the Son of God redeem us from guilt, from misery, and from hell! May the Holy Ghost sanctify and save us!

From this general creed, let us now proceed to particular doctrines.

II. We believe in the atonement. That is to say, we believe in what that word, and similar words mean, in the New Testament. We take not the responsibility of supporting the popular interpretations. They are various, and are constantly varying, and are without authority, as much as they are without uniformity and consistency. What the divine record says, we believe according to the best understanding we can form of its import. We believe that Jesus Christ "died for our sins;" that he "died, the just for the unjust;" that "he gave his life a ransom for many;" that "he is the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world;" that "we have redemption through his blood;" that we "have access to God, and enter into the holiest, that is, the nearest communion with God, by the blood of Jesus." We have no objection to the phrase "atoning blood," though it is not Scriptural, provided it is taken in a sense which the Scripture authorizes.

But what now is the meaning of all this phraseology,

and of much more that is like it? Certainly it is, that there is some connexion between the sufferings of Christ and our forgiveness, our redemption from sin and misery. This we all believe. But what *is* this connexion? Here is all the difficulty; here is all the difference of opinion. We all believe, all Christians believe, that the death of Christ is a means of our salvation. But how is it a means? Was it, some one will say, perhaps, as if he were putting us to the test; was it an atonement, a sacrifice, a propitiation? We answer, that it was an atonement, a sacrifice, a propitiation. But now the question is, *what is* an atonement, a sacrifice, a propitiation? And this is the difficult question; a question, to the proper solution of which much thought, much cautious discrimination, much criticism, much knowledge and especially of the ancient Hebrew sacrifices, is necessary. Can we not "receive the atonement," without this knowledge, this criticism, this deep philosophy? What then is to become of the mass of mankind, of the body of Christians? Can we not savingly "receive the atonement," unless we adopt some particular explanation, some peculiar creed, concerning it? Who will dare to answer this question in the negative, when he knows that the Christian world, the Orthodox Christian world, is filled with differences of opinion concerning it? The Presbyterian Church of America is, at this moment, rent asunder on this question. Christians are, everywhere, divided on the questions, whether the redemption is particular or general; whether the sufferings of Christ were a literal endurance of the punishment due to sin, or only a moral equivalent; and whether this equivalency, supposing this to be the true explanation, consists in the endurance of God's displeasure against sin, or only in a *simple* manifestation of it.

The atonement is one thing; the gracious interposition of Christ in our behalf; the doing of all that was necessary to be done, to provide the means and the way for our salvation—this is one thing; in this we all believe. The philosophy, the theory, the theology of the atonement, is another thing. About this, Orthodox Christians are differing with one another, about as much as they are differing from us. Nay more, they are saying as hard things of one another as they ever said of us. Is it not time to learn wisdom? Is there not good reason for taking the ground we do; the ground, that is to say, of general belief and trust, without insisting upon particular and peculiar explanations?

We believe in Christ; and well were it if we all believed in him too fervently and tenderly to be engaged much in theological disputes and denunciations. We believe in Christ. We pray to God through him. We ask God to bless us for his sake; for we feel that Christ makes intercession, and has obtained the privilege to be heard, through his own meritorious sufferings. Christ's sacrifice is the grandest, the most powerful means of salvation. It was a transcendent and most affecting example of meekness, patience and forgiveness of injuries. It was a most striking exhibition of God's gracious interest and concern for us, of his view of the evil and curse of sin, and of his compassion for the guilty, and of his readiness to forgive the penitent. It was an atonement; that is to say, a means of reconciliation,—reconciliation not of God to us, but of us to God. The blood of that sacrifice was atoning blood; that is, it was blood, on which whoever looks rightly, is touched with gratitude and humility and sorrow for his sins, and thus is reconciled to God by the death of his Son.

Now it is possible that we do not understand and

receive all that is meant by the Scriptures on this subject. We admit it, as what imperfection ought always to admit; but we admit it, too, for the sake of saying, that, so long as we receive all that we can understand from the language in question; so long as we receive and believe every word that is written; no man has a right to say to us, without qualification, "You do not believe in the atonement." He may say, "You do not believe in the atonement according to my explanation, or according to Calvin's explanation; but he has no right to say, without qualification, "You do not believe in the doctrine, you do not believe in the propitiation, in the reconciliation, in the sacrifice of Jesus;" no more right, than we have to address the same language to him.*

* In an Introductory Essay to Butler's Analogy, published by a leading defender of what is called the New Divinity in the Presbyterian Church, the author says, "We maintain that the System of Unitarians, which denies all such substitution,"—meaning the removal of calamities from us, in ordinary life, by the interposition and suffering of another,—"is a violation of all the modes in which God has yet dispensed his blessings to man" We may just observe in passing, that the respectable author would not say, on reflection, "of *all* the modes;" for many of the most momentous blessings are dispensed to us through our own agency. But this is what he would say, that the Unitarian belief, with regard to the atonement, violates, as he conceives, one great principle of the divine beneficence. And that is the principle, that blessings are often conferred on us, in the course of Providence, through the instrumentality of others, of parents, friends, fellow-beings, &c. "It is by years of patient toil in others," says Mr. Barnes, in his Essay, "that we possess the elements of science, the principles of morals, the endowments of religion." "Over a helpless babe,—ushered into the world, naked, feeble, speechless, there impends hunger, cold, sickness, sudden death,—a mother's watchfulness averts these evils. Over a nation impend revolutions, sword, famine, and the pestilence. The blood of the patriot averts these, and the nation smiles in peace." It is true that the author does "not affirm that this is *all* that is meant by an atonement," and herein we entirely agree with him. But he

We believe then in the atonement. We believe in other views of this great subject, than those which are expressed by the word *atonement*. But this word spreads before our minds a truth of inexpressible interest. The reconciliation by Jesus Christ, his interpo-

certainly is mistaken, when he says, that Unitarians deny all such substitution. We deny the Calvinistic explanation of atonement or substitution. We might reject the author's hypothesis, too, if we knew what it was. But does it follow, that we deny all substitution? On the contrary, we especially hold to such substitution.

If all reputed belief in the atonement is to depend on receiving one particular explanation of it, where is this to end? The party in the Presbyterian Church which strictly adheres to their standards, that is, to the genuine old Calvinistic theology, charges Mr. Barnes and his friends, and the body of New England Divines, with holding "another gospel." These again charge Dr. Taylor and the New Haven School with holding "another gospel." Meanwhile, each of these bodies very stoutly defends its position, insists upon its adherence to Christianity, and protests against the sentence of excision. Has either of these parties obtained a monopoly in protestation and profession? Are liberality and candor to stop with each party, just where its convenience may dictate? Have they needed charity so much, that they have used it all up? Is the last chance of a candid and kind construction gone by? and is nobody ever to be permitted any more to say, "We believe in the Gospel, though not according to your explanation?"

There are, perhaps, no more accredited defenders of the popular doctrine of the atonement than Andrew Fuller and Bishop Magee. Fuller, as quoted by Evans in his "Sketch," says, "If we say, a way was opened by *the death of Christ*, for the free and consistent exercise of mercy in all the methods which sovereign wisdom saw fit to adopt, perhaps we shall include every material idea which the Scriptures give us of that important event."—*Evans*, p 120, 14th edition.

To the question, "In what way can the death of Christ be conceived to operate to the remission of sins?" Magee says, "The answer of the Christian is, I know not, nor does it concern me to know, *in what manner* the sacrifice of Christ is connected with the forgiveness of sins; it is enough that this is declared by God to be the medium through which my salvation is effected."—*Magee on the Atonement*, p. 29, American edition.

With these declarations we entirely agree.

sition to bring us nigh to God, is to us his grandest office. To our minds there is no sentence of the holy volume, more interesting, more weighty, more precious, than that passage in the sublime Epistle to the Ephesians, "Ye were strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometime were far off, are brought nigh by the blood of Christ." It is this which the world needed; it is this which every mind now needs, beyond all things; to be brought nigh to God. By error, by superstition and sin, by slavish fears and guilty passions and wicked ways, we were separated from him. By a gracious mission from the Father, by simple and clear instructions, by encouraging representations of God's paternal love and pity, by winning examples of the transcendent beauty of goodness, and, most of all, by that grand consummation, DEATH, by that exhibition of the curse of sin, in which Jesus was made a curse for it, by that compassion of the Holy One, which flowed forth in every bleeding wound, by that voice for ever sounding through the world, "Father! Father! forgive them," Jesus has brought us nigh to God. Can it be thought enthusiasm to say, that there is no blessing, either in possession or in the range of possibility, to be compared with this? Does not reason itself declare, that all the harmonies of moral existence are broken, if the great, central, all-attracting Power, be not acknowledged and felt? Without God—to every mind that has awaked to the consciousness of its nature—without God, life is miserable; the world is dark; the universe is disrobed of its splendours; the intellectual tie to nature is bro ken; the charm of existence is dissolved; the great hope of being is lost; and the mind itself, like a star struck from its sphere, wanders through the infinite

region of its conceptions, without attraction, tendency, destiny or end. "Without God in the world!" what a comprehensive and desolating sentence of exclusion is written in those few words! "Without God in the world!" It is to be without the presence of the Creator amidst his works, of the Father amidst his family, of the Being who has spread gladness and beauty all around us. It is to be without spiritual light, without any sure guidance or strong reliance, without any adequate object for our ever expanding love, without any sufficient consoler for our deepest sorrows, without any protector when the world joins against us, without any refuge when persecution pursues to death, without any all-controlling principle, without the chief sanction of duty, without the great bond of existence. Oh! dark and fearful in spirit must we be, poor tremblers upon a bleak and desolate creation, deserted, despairing, miserable must we be, if the Power that controls the universe is not our friend, if God be nothing to us but a mighty and dread abstraction to which we never come near; if God be not "*our* God, and our exceeding great reward for ever!" This is the fearful doom that is reserved in the gospel of Christ. This the fearful condition from which it was his great design to deliver us. For this end it was that he died, that he might bring us nigh to God. The blood of martyrdom is precious; but this was the blood of a holier sacrifice, of innocence pleading for guilt, "of a lamb without spot and without blemish, slain from the foundation of the world."

But we must pass to other topics, and the space that remains will oblige us to give them severally much less expansion in this brief statement.

III. In the third place, then, we say, that we believe in human depravity; and a very serious and sadden

ing belief it is, too, that we hold on this point. We believe in the very great depravity of mankind, in the exceeding depravation of human nature. We believe that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." We believe all that is meant, when it is said of the world in the time of Noah, that "all the imaginations of men, and all the thoughts of their hearts were evil, and only evil continually." We believe all that Paul meant, when he said, speaking of the general character of the heathen world in his time, "There is none that is righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God; they have all gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good, or is a doer of good, no, not one; with their tongues they use deceit, and the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; and the way of peace have they not known, and there is no fear of God before their eyes." We believe that this was not intended to be taken without qualifications, for Paul, as we shall soon have occasion to observe, made qualifications. It was true in the general. But it is not the ancient heathen world alone, that we regard as filled with evil. We believe that the world now, taken in the mass, is a very, a *very* bad world; that the sinfulness of the world is dreadful and horrible to consider; that the nations ought to be covered with sackcloth and mourning for it; that they are filled with misery by it. Why, can any man look abroad upon the countless miseries inflicted by selfishness, dishonesty, slander, strife, war; upon the boundless woes of intemperance, libertinism, gambling, crime; can any man look upon all this, with the thousand minor diversities and shadings of guilt and guilty sorrow, and feel that he could write any less dreadful sentence against the world than Paul has

written? Not believe in human depravity; great, general, dreadful depravity! Why, a man must be a fool, nay, a stock or a stone, not to believe in it! He has no eyes, he has no senses, he has no perceptions, if he refuses to believe in it!

But let the reader of this exposition take with him these qualifications; for although it is popular, strangely popular, to speak extravagantly of human wickedness, we shall not endeavour to gain any man's good opinion by that means.

First, it is not the depravity of *nature*, in which we believe. Human nature, nature as it exists in the bosom of an infant, is nothing else but capability; capability of good as well as evil, though more likely from its exposures, to be evil than good. It is not the depravity, then, but the depravation of nature, in which we believe.

Secondly, it is not in the unlimited application of Paul's language, that we believe. When he said, "No, not one," he did not mean to say, without qualification, that there was not one good man in the world. He believed that there *were* good men. He did not mean to say, that there was not one good man in the *heathen* world; for he speaks in another place, of those, who, "not having the law, were a law to themselves, and by nature *did* those things which are written in the law." Paul meant, doubtless, to say, that the world is a very bad world, and in this we believe.

Neither, thirdly, do we believe in what is technically called "total depravity;" that is to say, a total and absolute destitution of every thing right, even in bad men. No such critical accuracy do we believe that the Apostle ever affected, or ever thought of affecting. A very bad child may sometimes love his parents, and be melted into great tenderness toward them; and so

a mind estranged from God, may sometimes tenderly feel his goodness.

Finally, we would not portray human wickedness without the deepest consideration and pity for it. Alas! how badly is man educated, how sadly is he deluded, how ignorant is he of himself, how little does he perceive the great love of God to him, which, if he were rightly taught to see it, might melt him into tenderness and penitence. Let us have some patience with human nature till it is less cruelly abused! Let us pity the sad and dark struggle that is passing in many hearts, between good and evil; and, though evil so often gains the ascendancy, still let us pity, while we blame it; and while we speak to it in the solemn language of reprobation and warning, let us "tell these things," as Paul did, "even weeping."

IV. From this depraved condition, we believe, in the fourth place, that men are to be recovered, by a process which is termed, in the Scriptures, regeneration. We believe in regeneration, or the new birth. That is to say, we believe, not in all the ideas which men have annexed to those words, but in what we understand the sacred writers to mean by them. We believe that, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" that "he must be new created in Christ Jesus;" that "old things must pass away, and all things become new." We certainly think that these phrases applied with peculiar force to the condition of people, who were not only to be converted from their sins, but from the very forms of religion in which they had been brought up; and we know indeed that the phrase "new birth" did, according to the usage of language in those days, apply especially to the bare fact of proselytism. But we believe that men are still to be converted from their sins,

and that this is a change of the most urgent necessity and of the most unspeakable importance.

The application of this doctrine, too, is nearly universal. Some, like Samuel of old, may have grown up to piety from their earliest childhood, and it may be hoped that the number of such, through the means of more faithful education, is increasing. But we confess that we understand nothing of that romantic dream of the innocence of childhood. There are few children who do not need to be "converted;" from selfishness to disinterestedness, from the sullenness or violence of crossed passions to meekness and submission, from the dislike to the love of piety and pious exercises; from the habits of a sensual, to the efforts of a rational and spiritual nature. Childhood is, indeed, often pure, compared with what commonly follows, but still it needs a change. And that, which does commonly follow, is a character which needs to be essentially changed, in order to prepare the soul for happiness in heaven.

Now there is usually a time in the life of every devoted Christian when this change commences. We say not, a moment; for it is impossible so to date moral experiences. But there is a time, when the work is resolutely begun. Begun, we say; for it cannot in any brief space be completed. How soon it may be so far completed, as to entitle its subject to hope for future happiness, it is neither easy, nor material, to say. But to aver that it may be done in a moment, is a doctrine of which it is difficult to say whether it is, in our view, more unscriptural, extravagant, or dangerous.

With such qualifications and guards, authorized by the laws of sound criticism, we believe in regeneration; and we believe that the spirit of God is offered to aid, in this great work, the weakness of human endeavour.

V. We believe, too, in the fifth place, in the doctrine of election. That is to say, again, we believe in what the Scriptures, as we understand them, mean by that word.

The time has been, when, not the intrinsic importance of this doctrine, but the stress laid upon it, would have required that we should give it considerable space in this summary view. Our good old Arminian fathers fought with it for many a weary day. It was the great stumbling-block in the way of the last generation. And, during our time, it has been held, firmly and by many hands, in its place, as one of the essential foundations of faith. But, within a few years past, it has come to be almost entirely overlooked; many preachers have almost ceased to direct attention to it; and many hearers are left to wonder what has become of it, and why it ever occupied a situation so conspicuous. Would that the history of it might be a lesson!

The truth is, that the doctrine of election is a matter either of scholastic subtilty or of presumptuous curiosity, with which, as we apprehend, we have but a very little to do. Secret things belong to God. We believe in what the Bible teaches of God's infinite and eternal foreknowledge. We believe that, of all the events and actions, which take place in the universe of worlds, and the eternal succession of ages, there is not one, not the minutest, which God did not forever foresee, with all the distinctness of immediate vision. It is a sublime truth. But it is a truth, which the moment we undertake to analyze and apply, we are confounded in ignorance, and lost in wonder. We believe, but we would take care that we do not presumptuously believe. We believe in election, not in selection. We believe in foreknowledge, not in fate. We believe in the boundless wisdom of God, but not less in the weak-

ness of our own comprehension. We believe that his thoughts are not as our thoughts, and that his ways are not as our ways, and his counsels are not as our counsels, and his decrees are not as our decrees. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so is he above the reach of our frail and finite understanding.

VI. In the sixth place, we believe in a future state of rewards and punishments. We believe that sin must ever produce misery, and that holiness must ever produce happiness. We believe that there is good for the good, and evil for the evil; and that these are to be dispensed exactly in proportion to the degree in which the good or evil qualities prevail.

The language of Scripture, and all the language of Scripture on this solemn subject, we have no hesitation about using, in the sense in which it was originally meant to be understood. But there has been that attempt to give definiteness to the indefinite language of the Bible on this subject, to measure the precise extent of those words which spread the vastness of the unknown futurity before us; and with this system of artificial criticism, the popular ignorance of Oriental figures and metaphors, has so combined to fix a specific meaning on the phraseology in question, that it is difficult to use it without constant explanation. "Life everlasting," and "everlasting fire;" the mansions of rest, and the worm that never dieth, are phrases fraught with a just and reasonable, but at the same time, vast and indefinite import. They are too obviously figurative to permit us to found definite and literal statements upon them. And it is especially true of those figures and phrases that are used to describe future misery, that there is not one which is not also used in the Bible to describe things earthly, limited, and temporary.

So confident in their opinions are men made by education and the current belief, that they can scarcely think it possible that the words of Scripture should have any other meaning than that which they assign to them. And they are ready, and actually feel as if they had a right, to ask those who differ from them to give up the Bible altogether. Nay, they go so far sometimes, as to aver, in the honesty and blindness of their prejudices, that their opponents have given up the Bible, and have given up all thoughts of trying the questions at issue by that standard. We have an equal right certainly to return the exhortation and to retort the charge. At any rate, we can accept neither. We believe in the Scriptures, as heartily as any others, and, as we think, more justly. We believe in all that they teach on this subject, and in all they teach on any subject.

We believe, then, in a heaven and a hell. We believe that there is more to be feared hereafter than any man ever feared, and more to be hoped than any man ever hoped. We believe that heaven is more glorious, and that hell is more dreadful, than any man ever conceived. We believe that the consequences both in this world and another; that the consequences to every man, of any evil habits he forms, whether of feeling or action, run far beyond his most fearful anticipations. Are mankind yet so gross in their conceptions, that outward images convey the most transporting ideas they have of happiness, and the most tremendous ideas they have of misery? Is a celestial city all that they understand by heaven? Let them know that there is a heaven of the mind, a heaven of tried and confirmed virtue, a heaven of holy contemplation, so rapturous, that all ideas of place are transcended, are almost forgotten in its ecstacy. Is a world of elemental fires and

bodily torments, all that they understand by hell? Let them consider, that a hell of the mind, the hell of an inwardly gnawing and burning conscience, the hell of remorse and mental agony, may be more horrible than fire, and brimstone, and the blackness of darkness for ever! Yes, the crushing mountains, the folding darkness, the consuming fire might be welcomed, if they could bury, or hide, or sear the guilty and agonized passions, which, while they live, must for ever and for ever burn, and blacken, and blast the soul; which, while they live, must for ever and for ever crush it down to untold and unutterable misery.

VII. Once more, and finally; we believe in the supreme and all-absorbing importance of religion.

There is nothing more astonishing to us, than the freedom of language which we sometimes hear used, on this subject; the bold and confident tone with which it is said that there is no religion among us, nothing but flimsy and fine sentiment, passing under the name of religion. We are ready to ask, what *is* religion in the hearts of men, what are its sources and fountains, when they can so easily deny it to the hearts of others? We are inclined to use no severity of retort, on this affecting theme; else the observation of life might furnish us with some trying questions for the uncharitable to consider. But we will only express the simple astonishment we feel at such treatment. We will only say again, and say it more in wonder than in anger; what must religion be in others, what can be its kindness, and tenderness, and peace, and preciousness, when they are so ready to rise up from its blessed affections, to the denial of its existence in the hearts of their brethren?

We repeat, then, that we believe in the supreme and all-absorbing importance of religion. "What shall it

profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" is to us the most undeniable of all arguments; "what shall I do to be saved?" the most reasonable and momentous of all questions; "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" the most affecting of all prayers. The soul's concern is the great concern. The interests of experimental, vital, practical religion are the great interests of our being. No language can be too strong, no language can be strong enough, to give them due expression. No anxiety is too deep, no care too heedful, no effort too earnest, no prayer too importunate, to be bestowed upon this almost infinite concern of the soul's purification, piety, virtue and welfare. No labour of life should be undertaken, no journey pursued, no business transacted, no pleasure enjoyed, no activity employed, no rest indulged in, without ultimate reference to that great end of our being. Without it, life has no sufficient object, and death has no hope, and eternity no promise.

What more shall we say? Look at it; look at this inward being, and say, what is it? Formed by the Almighty hand, and therefore formed for some purpose; built up in its proportions, fashioned in every part, by infinite skill; an emanation, breathed from the spirit of God; say, what is it? Its nature, its necessity, its design, its destiny; what is it? So formed it is, so builded, so fashioned, so exactly balanced, and so exquisitely touched in every part, that sin introduced into it, is the direst misery; that every unholy thought falls upon it as a drop of poison; that every guilty desire, breathing upon any delicate part or fibre of the soul, is the plague spot of evil, the blight of death. Made, then, is it for virtue, not for sin; oh! not for sin, for that is death; but made for virtue, for

purity, as its end, its rest, its bliss; made thus by God Almighty.

Thou canst not alter it. Go and bid the mountain walls sink down to the level of the valleys; go and stand upon the seashore and turn back its swelling waves; or stretch forth thy hand, and hold the stars in their courses, but not more vain shall be thy power to change them, than it is to change one of the laws of thy nature. *Then thou must be virtuous.* As true it is, as if the whole universe spoke in one voice, *thou must be virtuous.* If thou art a sinner, thou "must be born again." If thou art tempted, thou must resist. If thou hast guilty passions, thou must deny them. If thou art a bad man, thou must be a good man.

There is the law. It is not our law; it is not our voice that speaks. It is the law of God Almighty; it is the voice of God that speaks; speaks through every nerve and fibre, through every power and element of that moral constitution which he has given. It is the voice, not of an arbitrary will, nor of some stern and impracticable law, that is now abrogated. "For the *grace* of God, that hath appeared to all men, teaches, that, denying all ungodliness and every worldly lust, they must live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present evil world." So let us live; and then this life, with all its momentous scenes, its moving experiences, and its precious interests, shall be but the beginning of the wonders, and glories, and joys of our existence. So let us live; and let us think this, that to live thus, is the great, urgent, instant, unutterable, all-absorbing concern of our life and of our being.

ON THE

NATURE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF;

WITH INFERENCES CONCERNING DOUBT, DECISION, CONFIDENCE, AND THE TRIAL OF FAITH.

I.

Now I know in part.—1 Cor. xiii. 12.

It is of some importance, I think it is of no little importance, that we should entertain just ideas of the nature of religious belief. To this subject therefore, and especially with a view to consider some difficulties and to meet some practical questions, I wish, at present, to invite your attention.

In the first place, then, it may be observed in general, that religious belief is essentially of the same nature as moral belief. In form they differ, but in substance they are the same. The common distinction between Religion and Morals, as totally different things, is as erroneous in principle as it is injurious in its effects. Both have their root in the same great original sense of rectitude, which God has impressed on our nature; and without which we should not be men. By religion, we mean our duty to God; and by morals, our duty to men: and both are bound upon us by the same essential reason; that they are right. Or they are respectively, the love of God and the love of men; and both, in their highest character, are a love of the same goodness. Piety and philanthropy are essentially of

the same nature. The Bible appeals to both alike, and it does not sever, but it binds them together; summing up all its commandments in these two; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself:" and saying emphatically, "he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen!"

Further; as the original grounds of conviction, so the steps by which we arrive at our conclusions in both of these spheres of duty, are essentially the same. The steps are steps of reasoning. The Bible teaches morals and religion alike, and teaches them in the same way; and we arrive at its meaning in both, by the same means; viz. by that process of reasoning, called criticism. There is not one kind of criticism to be applied to those texts which teach the love of God, and another to those which teach the love of man; there is the same process of reasoning in both cases. And so in Natural Theology, and Moral Philosophy, alike, we begin with certain original truths in the mind, and proceed to deduce certain duties; and in both cases, the process of reasoning is, in kind, the same.

But now the material question, and that to which I have been endeavouring to bring you, is this; *what* kind of reasoning is it? And the answer is plain; it is that kind of reasoning which is usually called moral reasoning. It is commonly defined, simply by being distinguished from mathematical reasoning. That is to say, it is not like a mathematical deduction, infallible; it is not attended with a feeling of certainty, but only of belief.

But still we must distinguish; for it is important to observe that the difference of which we speak relates only to *deductions;* not at all to *principles.* The

original *principles* of religion and morals are certain. They are as certain as any other principles; as certain as the principles on which mathematical science is founded. They are not matters of belief at all, but matters of absolute knowledge. Though not in religious belief, accurately speaking, yet in religion, there are absolute certainties. I am as sure that I have a conscience and a religious nature; I am as sure again, that benevolence and other moral qualities are right; and I am as sure that my nature is constituted to approve and love them, wherever they appear, in man or in God, as I am of my own existence and identity, or as I am that my nature is constituted to assent to the truth of any mathematical axioms. It is important to say this, because the distinction commonly made between mathematical and moral reasonings, may be carelessly extended, so as to cover more ground than belongs to it. For the basis of the mathematics is not more certain and irrefragable, than the basis of morals.

But the moment we take one step from that basis, from those first principles, and enter upon deductions, it is agreed by all reasoners, that a marked and essential difference obtains. In the mathematics, every step of the deduction is as certain as the principle from which it started. In moral reasonings, it is not so. The ideas, involved in these reasonings, are not so definite, the terms not so clear, and the result is, by no means, so unerring. The steps of moral deduction, of philological criticism, are not steps of demonstration. But these are the steps that lead to religious belief, that conduct to a creed. A creed is not a certainty, but a belief. Put any certainty into a creed, and the absurdity would at once be felt. No one could gravely stand up and say, "I believe in my own existence;

I believe in my identity; I believe that I ought to be a good man." These are matters of certainty; but the propositions of a creed are matters of logical inference. The seal upon it is not absolute consciousness, but religious conviction. The scale, on which that conviction is marked, is the scale of probability. I use this term, probability, I ought to say, in the technical sense which moral reasoners assign to it, which is stronger, and more definite than the popular sense. I use it as simply opposed to certainty. On the scale of probability, or of moral reasoning, in other words, belief often rises, no doubt, almost to certainty. But it never, strictly speaking, arrives at that point. It is never absolute certainty; it is never perfect knowledge. For, "we know in part," says the Apostle.

From these views, I am not aware that any intelligent moral or religious reasoners dissent. The distinction is familiar in all the standard writers, and may be considered as the settled judgment of all who are competent to form an opinion on the subject. Moral evidence is not demonstration. Belief is not knowledge. Believing a thing to be true, is not knowing it to be true.

Not to dwell longer, then, upon a point so plain, and so universally conceded, my further purpose is to offer some remarks upon this admitted nature of religious belief.

I. My first remark is, if the view presented be just, that it is common to assign, in some respects, a very injurious and unwarrantable importance to doubts.

Doubts enter into the very processes by which we arrive at belief. Nay, they enter into the very nature of belief itself. They constitute a part of it, by very definition. Believing is doubting, to a certain extent. Believing and doubting are correlative terms. They

are co-essential elements. "We know in part." That is to say, our knowledge is imperfect. But imperfect knowledge implies uncertainty. And uncertainty is doubt.

But the prevalent feeling and policy of the Christian world has been, to beat down and destroy doubts. It has given them no quarter. It has allowed them no place in the theory of its creeds, though those creeds have begun with the phrase "I believe;" not "I know," but "I believe." And this tendency of the public opinion and practice of the churches, has had the effect, I wish it may be considered, to give not only an unwarrantable, but a most injurious importance to doubts. Its effect has been, not only to rend the bosom of the church, to cast out many honest and virtuous men from it, to make a new sect for every new doubt; but, I fear, to make many, who might have been preserved from that result, infidels. Doubt, I say, has derived a factitious importance, from this universal persecution. That portion of evidence, which leads a man to doubt, has been held by him to deserve more attention, than that which leads him to believe. One fraction of doubt has weighed with him more than nine parts of evidence in favour of Christianity, and he has become an unbeliever, we may say, against his own convictions. It is an independent and honest mind, too—which makes the case a more unfortunate one—that is especially liable to be carried away by this fallacy. Such an one, afraid of every thing implicit and traditional in faith, says, "I have a doubt; I must be fair and impartial; I must be true to my convictions; I must assent to nothing from fear or favour; *I have a doubt*," this man says, "and how can I say I believe, so long as I doubt?" But why, let me ask in turn, should he pay this sort of homage to a mere negative conviction?

What is there in a doubt; that is to say, what is there in a reason *against*, that is to be treated with so much more consideration, than in a reason *for*? Why should not this man say, though he may *not* feel that the argument is perfectly satisfactory, though he *may* be troubled with doubts; why should he not say, "I have twice as much evidence for the Bible and a future life, as I have against them, and how can I *doubt* so long as I have that evidence?" I am sure this conclusion would be twice as rational as the other; and I am certain, that the spirit of this conclusion would have saved many from unbelief. But we do not ask so much as we have asked, in form, and by way of rejoinder. We do not ask, we have no right, as advocates or apologists for Christianity, to ask the man who hesitates, to say that he has *no* doubts; but we do ask, and have, in reason, a right to ask, that he should yield his mind, not to any assumed power or importance of doubt, but to the preponderance of evidence.

Beside the doubt about Christianity, there is another which may be considered as a part of it, but which, I think, demands a distinct notice; and that is, the doubt about a future life. This is a doubt which is much more frequently felt, than expressed. You will always observe, when it is expressed, that it is done with great reluctance and caution, with a feeling almost as if a crime were confessed; and with a feeling too, as if the matter of the confession were quite as peculiar to the individual confessing, as it is painful to him.

Now the difficulty here arises from our not sufficiently considering the nature of moral evidence, the nature of religious belief. It would relieve us, to be at once more frank and rational, instead of wrapping up the matter like a dark secret, in the cloud of our specu-

lative misapprehensions. The truth is, that, in doubt on this point, there *is* nothing very strange. It belongs to more minds than you may imagine. It must belong, more or less, to all minds. It enters into the very nature of our belief in a future state. For that belief is not certainty. The point in question, is not the subject of intuition. No man ever saw the world of departed spirits. All the views and convictions, that any man has or can have about it, fall short of actual knowledge. We believe, indeed, in the divine mission of Christ. We believe, too, in the mercy of God, and should entertain some hope of a future life, even on the general ground of natural Theology. We see not, moreover, how the scene of this life can be cleared up, how the great plan of things can be made consistent or tolerable, without a future scene. And on all these accounts we have a strong faith in futurity. But to say that this faith has passed beyond every shadow of doubt, is to say more than is true, more than can be reasonably demanded of faith.

Now this shadow, sometimes passing over the mind; why should it chill, or darken, or distress any one, as if it were something portentous, or in fact, anything extraordinary? Certainty, it is true, would be grateful. Uncertainty is painful; though it is also, I think, and will yet attempt to show, useful. It is painful, however, I confess, in proportion as it is great. But this is what I say; it is not at all surprising. It is a part of our dispensation. Some clouds are between us and those ever bright regions, in whose existence we fully believe. So God has willed it to be We see through a glass darkly. We walk by faith and not by sight. We long for a sight of those regions of existence in which we are to live; but it has not pleased God to give us that vision.

And the point that I would urge is, that we should not give any undue importance to this lack of vision, or of certainty. We should do most unwisely and unnecessarily, to magnify the importance of this doubt, by considering it as anything peculiar, or awful, or criminal. It is painful, indeed, but not wonderful. It is painful; but the pain, like all the pains of our moral imperfection, is an element of improvement; and it is to be removed by reflection, by prayer, by self-purification. To the mind rightly thinking and feeling, the evidence of immortality is growing continually stronger and stronger. Already with some, it touches upon the borders of certainty. So may it do with every one who hears me. And the direction to be given for every one's guidance is, not to stumble at doubt, but to press on to certainty. And I hold and firmly believe, that an assurance, all but vision, is just as certainly at the end of the process, with every right mind, as complete demonstration is at the end of every true theorem in science.

This undue importance attached to doubts, becomes a still more serious matter, when it affects not only a man's opinions, but his practice. Do not many neglect to lead a strictly virtuous and religious life, on this plea of uncertainty about the result? Is it not, at least, the plea which the heart secretly offers, to justify its indolence or indifference? A man says with himself, "I do not know what *is* the right way, there are so many disputes about it;" and he thinks that, an apology for his neglect of the whole subject. Or he says, perhaps, "I do not *know* that the Bible is true; I do not *know* that there is any future life, or that there is any retribution hereafter. If I *did know* it, I should act upon my knowledge; but the fact is, there is no certainty about these matters, and therefore I shall give myself

no trouble about them." Now to justify this conclusion, he should be able to say, "I know that the Bible is *not* true, and that there *is* no future life, and no retribution hereafter." If he *could* say this, then his premises would be as broad as his conclusion. But to say, "I do not know," and therefore to do nothing, is as if a man should say, "I do not know that I shall have a crop, and therefore I will sow no seed;" or, "I do not know that I shall gain property, and therefore I will do no business;" or, "I do not know that I shall obtain happiness, and therefore I will not seek it." The truth is, that, in the affairs of this life, men act upon the strongest evidence, upon the strongest probability; it is a part of the very wisdom of their condition, that they should so act; and so they ought to act, so it is wise that they should be left to act, in the affairs of religion. If any one refuses to act upon such a ground, he refuses the discipline of his own nature, and of God's providence; and neither his own nature nor the providence of heaven, will hold him guiltless.

II. Nay more, as a religious being, he must act upon some ground, and he ought to choose the most reasonable ground; and this is the substance of the second remark I have to offer on the nature of religious belief.

It is not often enough considered, perhaps, that every man, every thinking man, at least, must have some theory, must choose between opposing arguments; must come to some conclusion, which he is to take and defend, with all its difficulties. He who doubts, is apt to regard himself as occupying vantage ground in religious discussion; as occupying a position above the believer, and entitled to look down upon him without sympathy, and even with scorn; as if he, the infidel, stood aloof from the difficulties that press upon questions of this nature. But this is an entire mistake.

He too, the infidel, is in the battle, and there is no discharge in that war. I have said that believing is doubting to a certain extent. I now say that doubting is believing to a certain extent. The doubter holds a theory. That extreme of doubt, denominated Pyrrhonism, is still a theory. It is believing something; and something very prodigious, too; even that *nothing* is to be believed! Doubting, I say, is believing to a certain extent. A man may say he is certain of nothing. But he is certain, I suppose, of his uncertainty; certain that he is a doubter; certain then that he is a thinker; certain that he is a conscious being. But still he may say, willing to doubt all he can, that with regard to the *objects* of his consciousness, he can have no certainty. He is conscious of the difference between truth and error, right and wrong; but he is not certain, he says, that these perceptions of his agree with the absolute, the real truth of things. Is this doubt reasonable; or possible? A man has a perception of existence. What existence? His own. He knows that *he exists*. A man has a perception of rectitude. What rectitude? Why, of a rectitude *within him*, just as certainly existing as he exists. There is a feeling in him: he approves it. That is final. He cannot go behind this consciousness, into a region of doubt, any more than he can go behind the consciousness of his existence. Like a flash of lightning, like the voice of thunder, is this revelation of conscience from the thickest cloud of his doubts; it is as clear and strong and irresistible.

But suppose that we have brought the doubter thus far to the recognition of the great primitive facts of philosophy and religion; yet when we come to the deductions from these facts, to a system of faith, we have admitted that there is some uncertainty. How shall our reasoner proceed here? Shall he say that

because there is uncertainty, he will believe nothing? That would be refusing to do the only thing and the very thing, which the circumstances require of him; even to choose between opposing arguments. It would be as if the mariner should say, "the waters are unstable beneath me; they sway me this way and that way; and I will lay no course across the deep." No, the only question is; what is it best to *do?* What is the wisest course to take? What is it most reasonable to believe in? The moral inquirer is on the ocean; and to give himself up to doubt, indifference and inaction, is to perish there. And the question is between remaining in this state, and adopting some religious faith for guidance and support.

Now it appears to me, that the coldest and feeblest statement of the argument for religious faith, gathers strength and warmth, from being placed in this point of light. For thus would a man reason on this ground. "To doubt every thing, to doubt all the primitive facts of my moral consciousness, I have admitted, is self-contradicting absurdity. But to reject all religious systems flowing from them, because they are not equally certain, is as false in philosophy as to reject the original facts. Something, I *must believe;* something better or something worse. Some conclusions flow out of the principles, and I cannot help it. To reject all conclusion is irrational and impossible folly. Nay more, I am bound to accept those conclusions that favour the improvement of my nature. That I am made to improve is as certain as that I am made to be. Now to reject *all religious faith*, is ruin to my spiritual nature. To deny, for instance, the doctrine of immortality, comes to the same thing; my soul dies now, if it is not to live for ever. To reject Christianity is to reject what is obviously the most powerful means of

improvement in the world. At any rate, if there be no truth at all in religion, if its grandest principles are falsehoods, and its grandest revelations are dreams, then the very spring of improvement in me is broken, and my situation involves this astounding absurdity; that I am made to improve, to be happy in nothing else, and yet that this is the very thing for which no provision is made; that an appetite is given me, which craves divine and immortal good; that on its being supplied depends the essential life of my mind and heart; and yet, that beneath the heavens there is no food for it; no, nor above the heavens; that the only provision made for it is poison and death!"

Can this be?—as it must be if the skeptic's theory be true. Can it be that a light is on my path, which leads me to the loftiest and most blessed virtue and happiness—such is the light of religion—and yet that it sprung from the dark suggestions of fraud and imposture? Can it be, that God has formed our minds to feel the most inexpressible longings after a life beyond the barriers of time; and yet, that he has left our hearts to break with the dreadful conviction that the blessed land is not for us? Is this the obvious reasonableness of the skeptic's choice? Is this the charm of doubt, that is to outweigh the whole mass of evidence? Why such useless and cruel contradictions and incongruities, as enter into the unbeliever's plan? Why are we sent to wander through this world, in sorrow and despair, as we must do, if there is no guiding light and no inviting prospect?

It would be easy, if there were space in this discussion, to present in many lights, the glaring contradictions to which skepticism must lead, and which surely are harder to receive than any tolerably rational system of faith. Suppose that such system were not free

from serious difficulties. I think it is; but suppose that it were not. Yet if the weight of evidence be in its favour; and if we must embrace some system, and that of faith clears up more difficulties than the opposite system; is it not most reasonable that our minds should settle down into a calm and confiding belief? Let every man, with these views, make his election. Let him choose—for these are the questions—whether he will take, for his portion, light or darkness, cheerfulness or sadness, hope or despair, the warmth of confiding piety or the cold and cheerless atmosphere of distrust, the spirit of sacred improvement or the spirit of worldly negligence and apathy. I do not wish, in making this contrast, to speak with any harshness of skepticism. I state it as it appears to myself, and as it would appear, let me embrace whichever theory I might. Faith is light, and cheerfulness, and hope, and devotion, and improvement. And doubt, on essential points, is in its very nature darkness, and sadness, and despondency, and distrust, and spiritual death.

For which, think you—for I cannot help pressing the alternative a moment longer—for which was our nature made? To be lifted up and strengthened, to be bright and happy, or to be cast down and crushed; to be the victim of doubt; to be plunged into the dungeon of despair? Suppose a man should literally shut himself up in a dungeon, should sit down in darkness, and surround himself with none but dismal objects, should resign his powers to inaction, and give up all the glorious prospects and enjoyments of the wide and boundless universe; and then should say, that this was the portion designed for him by the Author of nature. What should we say to him? We should say, and surely we should take strong ground, "Your Maker has *given you limbs*, and senses; he has given

you active powers, and capacities for improvement, and he designed that you should use them; he made you not to dwell in a prison, not to dwell in dungeon glooms, but he made you for light, and action, and freedom, and improvement, and happiness. Your senses, your very faculties, both of body and mind, will perish and die, in this situation; go forth, then, into the open and fair domain of nature and life." And this we may say, with equal force, to him who is pausing on the threshold of the dreary prison-house of skepticism. God made us not to know, not to know everything, for then must he have made us equal to himself; but to believe, to confide, to trust. And he who refuses to receive what is reasonable, because it is not certain, refuses obedience to that very law, under which he is created and must live.

II.

Now I know in part.—1 Cor. xiii. 12

From these words, I resume the subject of my morning discourse. The subject was the nature of religious belief, though it was my leading object to present some *inferences* from the admitted principles of this kind of belief. With regard to the nature of faith, however, I stated what is admitted on all hands, that it is not certainty; that believing is not knowing; that this kind of conviction is entirely to be distinguished from intuition and from the results of scientific demonstration. But in this account of faith, I said that its original principles are not to be confounded. They are certain. They are not matters of faith, but of knowledge. I do not believe that I exist; I know it. I do not *believe* in the difference between right and wrong; I *know* it. I do not *believe* that benevolence or the promotion of others' happiness is right; I *know* it. In all these cases, I assert a self-evident proposition; a truism, in fact. I am but saying in effect, that right is right, and wrong is wrong. But the moment I depart from these primary moral distinctions and first truths of religion, and take one step of deduction, that is a step of faith. Absolute certainty then forsakes me, and I stand upon the ground of faith. My deductions then are not mathematical, but moral; they are not certain, but they take their place on the scale of logical probability. That is to say, they are accompanied with something more or less of doubt; and religious doubting therefore, ought not to be made the

monster that it has been, in the Christian world. It is giving an unwarrantable importance to doubt, thus to treat it. And this was the matter of my first inference. My next observation was, that every thinking man must have a system, and is bound to adopt that which is most reasonable; that the skeptic has a system as truly as the believer; and that in the balance of probabilities, the skeptic has adopted a system, which not only has its difficulties, like every other, but which has this special and insuperable difficulty; that it is fatal to the clearest principles and dearest hopes of human improvement.

III. In connection with what I have said about the nature of faith, let me now observe, in the third place, that those who profess to *know that they are right*, who profess this not only in regard to the great points of conscience and of consciousness, but also in regard to the peculiarities of their creed, have as little to support them, in a just view of the subject, as those who give an undue importance to their doubts; or as those who choose a system of doubt, (by definition, the weaker system,) in preference to a system of faith.

I have heard men say, when comparing themselves with their religious opponents, and I have remarded that it was said witn great self-complacency; "The difference between us and others is, that they think indeed, that they are right, but we know that we are right. *They* are confident that they hold the truth, but *we* are certain that we hold the truth." Now for any men to say this, is so very little to the credit of their discrimination, that it cannot be *much* to the credit of their correctness. It shows that so far from being entitled to presume that they have the right faith, that they do not know what any faith is; that they do not know what faith is in the most generic

sense; that they do not understand the definition of the term. Faith is not knowledge. Believing that we are right is not, in any tolerable use of the English language, knowing that we are right. For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? What he knoweth, why doth he speak of as a matter of faith? Demonstration is one thing; a creed is another, and an entirely different thing. It is so by definition.

I do not object to a firm persuasion in any mind, that it is right, provided the point be one on which it is competent to decide. I do not object, *now*, to the use of the phrase—as a phrase of great emphasis and energy—"I know, or I feel, or I am sure," that a certain doctrine is true. But when any persons profess to use this expression of confidence literally and accurately; when they hold this their assurance, as a specific and triumphant distinction; when they claim to be superior to others on such ground, and would attempt to overawe and abash modest and thoughtful men, by such arrogant and irrational pretensions to infallibility, I think it a proper occasion for applying the language of the apostolic rebuke, and telling them that they "know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm." They quite mistake the subject and subject-matter of which they are speaking; and I have only to remind them that it is *believing* that they were talking about, not *knowing*.

The principle must be a very poor one too, that works so poorly in practice; that destroys itself, indeed, the moment it is brought to its application. If different classes of Christians will say, modestly, and no matter how solemnly, that they believe that they are right; and yet will concede so much to human frailty as to admit, that they may be wrong in some measure; then, their respective claims do not destroy each other entirely,

nor destroy the common faith. But if every class will have it that it *knows* itself to be right, and knows everything differing from it to be wrong; what a picture of presumptuous, distracted and self-destroying churches is presented to us? Here is the Calvinist, that knows *he* is right; and the Arminian knows *he* is right; and the Universalist knows *he* is right; and the Swedenborgian has *his* full measure of the same comfortable knowledge; and the Presbyterian and Episcopalian, and the Methodist and Baptist, are each and all, possessed of the same undoubting assurance. Are all right, then, in the points in which they differ? No; that is impossible. To what, then, does this vaunted distinction of *knowing*, amount? To nothing at all. That cannot be a distinction which appertains to all classes, to individuals, that is to say, of all classes. To what, then, does the knowing itself amount? I answer once more, to nothing at all. For it is clear, that all this knowing cannot be knowledge. It may be confidence, and presumption, and positive assertion, but it is not knowledge.

But a man may say, "It is a matter of experience, and therefore I know it." *What*, let me ask, is a matter of experience? Not that any theological system is true, not that any doctrine is revealed, not that any one mode of church order is divinely ordained. These are matters of inference, not of experience. "Nay, but my meaning," says the confident votary, "is, that my faith or my mode of worship has had such an effect upon me; it has so delightfully wrought itself into my experience, that I am sure it must be the true doctrine, the true way. Heaven has thus sealed it to me in absolute certainty." If only one class could say this, it might amount to something like presumptive proof. But the truth is, that every

form of faith and discipline can present just such instances. It is particularly true, that recent conversion to a religious system is apt to produce this kind of vivid experience. There is not a faith in Christendom, Catholic or Protestant, strict or liberal, but has converts ready to proclaim its efficiency. The argument proves too much, legitimately to prove anything.

This arrogance, too, is as unseemly as it is baseless. If the subject did not forbid it, yet the sense of imperfection ought to restrain a frail, fallible, erring human being from such presumption; presumption too, which is commonly strong, in proportion as the doctrine is dark and doubtful, and the mind is readier to decide than to examine. Such, indeed, was not the spirit of Newton, "child-like sage." Such was not the spirit of Socrates, who, against the all-knowing sophists of his day, was accustomed to say that he professed to know nothing; that he was only a seeker after knowledge. Such, in fine, has never been the spirit of deep study and patient thought. But assurance rises up to speak, where modesty is silent; and a rash judgment, to pronounce, where patient inquiry hesitates; and ignorance to say, "I know," where real knowledge can only say, "I believe."

Such was not the spirit of the author of the "Saints' Rest," nor of the good old English time. "I am not so foolish," says Baxter, "as to pretend my certainty to be greater than it is, merely because it is a dishonour to be less certain. My certainty, that I am a man, is before my certainty, that there is a God. My certainty, that there is a God, is before my certainty, that he requireth love and holiness of his creatures. My certainty of this is greater than my certainty of the life of rewards and punishments hereafter. My certainty of that is greater than my *certainty* of the endless duration of

it, and the immortality of individual souls. My certainty of the Deity is greater than my certainty of the Christian faith. My certainty of the Christian faith, in its essentials, is greater than my certainty of the perfection and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures. And my certainty of that is greater than my certainty of many particular texts, and so of the truth of many particular doctrines, and of the canonicalness of some certain books."

Let me add a word of caution, however, if it can be necessary, in closing this part of my discourse. Because I maintain that absolute certainty does not properly attach to matters of faith, let it not by any means be regarded as a fair inference, that the great points of our Christian faith are to be held as if they were doubtful matters. A believer is, by definition, one whom belief, and not doubt, characterizes. And the Christian belief, I hold to be founded on such evidence, as to be put "beyond all reasonable doubt." This phrase, "beyond reasonable doubt," is held in the law, to describe the nearest approach to certainty, that is compatible with the nature of moral evidence; to describe such a degree of confidence as lays a just foundation for decision and action. Such I hold to be the nature and strength of the Christian faith.

I have thus attempted to show that uncertainty or doubt, greater or less in degree, is a part of our dispensation, implied in that declaration of the Apostle, that we know only in part; that it is implied in the very nature of moral evidence; implied in faith; and therefore that it is not to be regarded as monstrous, nor to be magnified into undue importance, nor to be made a reason for rejecting the system of faith; unless, in the second place, it can lay claim to a strength and consistency, and an escape from difficulties, which will

give it manifest superiority over the system of faith; a superiority which, on great points, is denied to it by its utter insufficiency to improve, exalt, strengthen and bless human nature; and, finally, I have insisted, that, on the other hand, no rational system of faith, when it goes beyond the principles of absolute conscience and consciousness, can pretend to be freed from doubt, can pretend to absolute certainty; and hence, that the confident assurance of the fanatic is, in this matter, as much out of place, as the overweening self-complacency of the skeptic.

IV. But after all, this, to some, may be a very unsatisfactory view of the subject. They may even think it injurious and unsafe. I must not leave the subject, therefore, without attempting, in the last place, to show the *utility* of that moral system and mental discipline, under which, as I contend, we are placed. That we are placed under it, is, indeed, in my view, a sufficient answer to all objections. But it may still be asked, why is it so? Why is there one shadow or shade left on our path? Why, instead of shining brighter and brighter, can it not be, from the beginning one track of brightness? Why are we not made just as sure of every moral truth, that is interesting and important to us, as we are that we behold the light of the sun? Why, in fine, is not moral evidence, like mathematical demonstration, put beyond every possibility of doubt?

It might, indeed, be answered that the very nature of the subjects, and of the mind, makes the difference. And I believe that this is true. At any rate, it is inconceivable to us that moral deductions should, by any possibility, have been made as definite and certain as those of the most exact science. But I am not obliged to rest the answer on this apparent necessity of the case alone; and *I proceed* to offer, in further defence

of that moral constitution of things under which our minds are trained up, the consideration of utility.

I say, then, that it is a useful system, a good system; the best system by us conceivable. If I am asked why we have not vision, instead of promise, to guide us; why we have not assurance, instead of trust; why not knowledge, instead of faith; I answer, because it is not expedient for us. Probably we could not bear vision, or it would be too much for our contentment or our attention to the objects around us; but I do not rest on a probability. I appeal to what is certain also; and that is, that assurance and knowledge would lessen the trial of virtue and of the intellect; and therefore would hinder their improvement.

To give an illustration of my meaning, and especially to show why it may not be expedient that we should have an actual vision of a future life; it is not best that children, for instance, should be introduced to an actual knowledge or experience of the circumstances, allurements, or interests of maturer life. That view of the future might too much dazzle or engross them, might distract them from the proper business of their education, and might, in many ways, bring a trial upon their young spirits, beyond their power to bear. Therefore, they look through a veil upon the full strength of human passions and interests. Human love and hate, and hope and fear, human ambition and covetousness, and splendour and beauty, they "see through a glass darkly." Just as little might we be able in this childhood of our being, to have the realities of a future scene laid open to us.

Again, for an illustration of the general advantages of inquiry instead of certainty; if a man were to travel around the globe, it might be far more agreeable and *easy for him*, to have a broad and beaten pathway, to

have marked and regular stages, to be borne onward in a chariot under an experienced and safe conduct, and to have deputations from the nations he passed through, to wait upon him, and to inform him exactly of every thing he wished to know. But would such a grand progress be as favourable to his character, to his mental cultivation or moral discipline, to his enterprise and good sense and hardihood and energy, as it would be to thread out his way for himself; to overcome obstacles and extricate himself from difficulties; to take, in other words, the general chart of his travels, and to gain an acquaintance with men and things, by inquiry and observation, and reasoning and experience? Such is the course ordained for the moral traveller in passing through this world. And certainly it is better for him; better that he should draw conclusions, though he make mistakes; better that he should reason upon probabilities, though he sometimes err; better that he should gain wisdom from experience, though the way be rough and sometimes overshadowed with uncertainty, than that he should always move on, upon the level and easy and sure path of knowledge.

Apply the same question to the ordinary course of life. A youth might always have a tutor, or a mentor to direct him. And then he would always be in the condition of one who knew what to do, of one who had no doubt. Yes, and *he would always be a child.* Can any one doubt that it would be more conducive to his improvement, to his courage and resolution, to his wisdom and worth, that he should be obliged to reason, to employ his powers, to be tried with conflicting views of subjects, to find out his own way, to grow wise by his own experience, and to have light break in upon his path as he needs it, or as he seeks it? But such *is the actual* course of life; and similar to

this, is the course which the mind must take in the religious life.

Nor is this all. It appears to me that there is one further, more specific, and more important use of the trials of faith; and that is, that they urge us to the most strenuous self-purification and fervent piety. I believe that it is an express law of religious progress, that the advancement and strength of our faith, other things being equal, are always in proportion to the fervour and purity of our religious affections. This law results from the very nature of the subjects to which it relates. Our faith in Christianity, for instance, and in a future life, is not a deduction of abstract reasoning, irrespective of ourselves and of the character of God, nor of the nature of the communication as compared with them. Belief is *grounded*, in part, on certain views of our nature and wants, and on certain views of the character of God. Now, none but a pure and spiritual mind can estimate the transcendent worth of its own nature, or can so love God, as to entertain a just view of his love to us, and to hope all, that the filial mind *will* hope from him. Self-purification, therefore, is an essential part of the progress, to light and certainty.

In this progress, not a few have arrived to the very confines of the land of vision. Their faith has become scarcely less than assurance. Invisible things have not only become the great realities, as they are to all men of true faith; but they have become, as it were, almost visible; there is a presence of God, felt and almost seen, in all nature and life; there is, in the heart, an assurance, a feeling of heaven and immortality. So it is oftentimes with the good man in the approach to death; the veil of flesh is almost rent from *him; the shadows* of mortal imperfection are disap-

pearing; the threshold of heaven is gained; and beamings from the ever-bright regions, fill his soul with their blessed light. Then it is, that it is hard to return to life; to pass again beneath the shadow; to feel the cold, dull realities of life effacing the impressions of heavenly beauty and glory. This is sometimes looked upon, I know, as a kind of hallucination, a visionary rapture; and so it sometimes may be; but the truth is, that in the purified mind, it is the result of principles in accordance with the strictest reason. The explanation is, that such a mind is prepared to receive the full and entire impression of the objects of faith; the light of heaven is indeed around that mind, because it is as an image pure and polished and bright to *reflect* the light of heaven.

True faith is, *indeed*, a great and sublime quality. It is greater, I am persuaded, than it is commonly accounted to be, much as it is exalted, and lauded in religious discourses. It is sometimes lauded, indeed, at the expense of reason. It is often so represented as if its sublimity consisted in its being a mystical quality, in its superiority to works, to the labours of duty, to the exercise of the quiet and humble virtues. To the hearer of such representations, it often seems as if this glory and charm of faith lay in a sort of visionary peace of mind, obtained without any reference to the culture of the mind or of the heart. But no; the very reverse of this is the truth. Faith is a great and sublime quality, because it is founded in eternal reason; because it is a patient and faithful inquirer, and not a hasty and self-confident rejector, not an idolizer of its own fanciful and visionary suggestions of doubt. It is great too, because it is moral; because, as an Apostle declares, it works by love, and purifies the heart; because *it is an elevation* of the soul towards the purity

and glory of the only and independently great and glorious Being. It is great, moreover, and in fine, because it is a principle of perpetual advancement. It does not write down its creed, as if it could never go beyond that; as if that were its standard and its limit; as if that were the sum and the perfection of all that it could ever receive. No; it is a sublime principle, because it takes hold of the sublimity of everlasting progress. When it reaches a brighter sphere; when it no longer knows in part, but knows as it is known; when its contemplation has become actual vision, and its deductions have risen to assume the certainty and take the place of first principles; then will it, on the basis of these first principles, proceed to still farther deductions. Still and ever will the fields of inquiry lie before it; far and for ever before it. Onward and onward will they spread, beneath other heavens, to other horizons; bright regions, leading to yet brighter regions; boundless worlds for thought to traverse, beyond the track of solar day; where—where shall its limit be? What eye can pursue its flight through the infinitude of ages!

Christian! wouldst thou make that boundless, that glorious career thine own? Then be faithful to the light that now shines around thee. Sink not to rest or slumber, beneath the passing shadows of doubt. To sink, to sleep, is not thy destination, but to wake, to rise. Rise then to the glorious pursuit of truth; connect with it the work of self-purification; open thy mind to heavenly hope; aspire to the life everlasting! Count it not a strange thing that thou hast difficulties and doubts. Well has it been said, that he who never doubted, never believed. Shrink not and be not afraid, when that cloud passeth over thee. *Through* the *cloud, still press* onward. Only be assured of this, and

with this assurance be of courage; God made thee to believe. Without faith, the ends of thy being cannot be accomplished, and therefore, it is certain that he made thee to believe. In perfect confidence, then, say this with thyself; "I am *sure* that I shall *believe;* all that is necessary for me, I *shall* believe; in the faithful and humble use of my faculties, I am assured that I shall come to this result. I fear not doubt; I fear not darkness; doubt is the way to faith, and darkness is the way to light." Come, holy light! come, blessed faith! and cheer every humble seeker with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

And it *will* come to every true and trusting heart. Why do I say this? Because, I still repeat, I know that God made our nature for faith, and virtue, and improvement. Why should it be difficult to see this? And are not skepticism and sin and the process of moral deterioration; are they not misery and darkness and destruction to our nature? Look at the young tree of the forest. Are you not sure that God made it to grow? And can you doubt that he made your moral nature, to grow and flourish? But how does he make *that tree* to grow? By pouring perpetual sunshine upon it? No; he sends the storm and the tempest upon it; the overshadowing cloud lowers upon its waving top; and its branches wrestle with the rude elements. So it is with human faith. Amidst storm and calm, amidst cloud and sunshine alike, it rises and rises, stronger and stronger; till it is transplanted at length, to the fair clime of heaven; there to grow and blossom, amidst everlasting light, in everlasting beauty.

NOTE.

I HAVE met in Professor Stuart's Miscellanies, just published, (see Appendix, p. 205–6) with the following (to me) very surprising comment, not only upon the language of the foregoing article, but upon the motives of the writer: surprising, because I as little suspected in my relations with my former Instructor in Biblical studies as in my own conscious integrity, any ground for such causeless wrong. In a notice of Mrs. Dana's admirable Letters, Professor Stuart says :—

"On p. 71 she has a long extract from Dr. Dewey, of New York, in which he asserts that the Unitarians believe in the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; in the atonement as a *sacrifice*, a *propitiation;* in human depravity, in regeneration, in the doctrine of election, and in a future state of rewards and punishments. On the part of such a man as Dr. Dewey I can call this nothing but gross deception. He knows well, although this lady-champion does not, that there is not a single one of these doctrines, according to the usual sense attached to them by all theologians of any name, which Unitarians admit, and which indeed they do not violently oppose. The artifice of Dr. Dewey consists in employing an entirely new set of definitions." And then, after speaking of the well-known and acknowledged difference between the Calvinistic and Unitarian construction of these doctrines, he adds—"The worst of the case is, that he (Dr. D.) knows this to be so; and yet he holds out these lures before the public. * * It is an unworthy—a degrading artifice to practise thus upon the credulity or ignorance of his uninstructed hearers or readers. It merits (what it will be certain sooner or later to receive) the scorn of every upright and honest man."

To this language, which I do not wish to characterize, the article may be quietly left, to reply for itself. Throughout, as the reader must see, a discrimination is studiously made, between the Orthodox and the Liberal construction of the terms in question. So far from my professing to hold them in the Calvinistic and Trinitarian sense; that is precisely what is denied. There

is nowhere any bald statement of a creed, as Professor Stuart lays it down for me; there is no such *sentence* as he professes to quote; but the subjects mentioned, are taken up in succession; and at every step the qualification is distinctly made, that we receive what the words, as we understand them, mean *in the Scriptures*, and *not* what they mean in the popular creeds. In the very outset, the reader will perceive, if he will turn to the paragraph on p. 5–6, that I argue for the propriety of our using some of these terms more freely than we do, though in a sense different from the Orthodox use, because they are Scripture terms. Indeed, if they had been used *without any express qualification*, if they had been recited as a bare creed, does not the very position of the writer as a Unitarian, obviously qualify them; and would not any man, on a moment's reflection, say—"Of course he uses them in a sense of his own!" And does Professor Stuart really suppose that we are anxious to be thought or called Trinitarians and Calvinists? The case speaks for itself. The allegation is absurd. It is scarcely possible for me, seriously to consider it. I can hardly persuade myself that Prof. Stuart himself believes what his language implies. And most sincerely do I wish, from the respect which I have always felt and expressed for him, that the charge might bear no more serious aspect any way, than it does towards myself.

The only pertinent, not to say decent charge, would be—not that of disingenuousness; intentional, mean, base, contemptible disingenuousness—but of impropriety, in the use of the terms with which I have set forth "the Unitarian Belief." If this were the allegation, I should then ask—Does Prof. Stuart mean to say that only he and those who think with him, have a right to define their faith, in Scripture language? This would be a new kind of claim. This would be an exclusion that would drive us beyond the pale of English speech. I had thought that speech and Bible speech were common property. He might as well say, "These persons profess to believe in God and Christ, in religion and holiness, and they are guilty of gross deception." What language, I pray, *are* we to use—believing as we do? We do believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. This is the great, primitive, Christian creed. As such it is introduced in the proselyte's ordinance of baptism. In baptism *we* continually use it. Must we not be allowed to say that we believe in what *those words mean*? We do believe in the Atone-

ment, the Sacrifice, the Propitiation, as we understand the New Testament to teach them; and in the same sense, we believe in human depravity, regeneration, election, and a future state of rewards and punishments. And can we not *say* that we believe in them, without incurring the charges of "gross deception," of "artifice," and of a conduct which "merits the scorn of all upright and honest minds"?

These theological common-places—these polemic accusations—alas! one is tempted to exclaim, in what school of morality is it, that they yet find a home? In what atmosphere of religious sentiment is it, that is breathed the fierce and fiery breath of such terrible accusations? If it were Christian, one could hardly wonder at the Infidelity, that should seek a better school.

CURSORY OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

QUESTIONS AT ISSUE BETWEEN ORTHODOX AND LIBERAL CHRISTIANS.*

I.

ON THE TRINITY.

WHAT is the doctrine of the Trinity? It is, that the Almighty Father is God; that Jesus, whom he sent into the world, is God; and that the Holy Spirit, represented also as a separate agent, is God; and yet that these three, "equal in power and glory," are but one God. This is what the advocate of the Trinity *says*. But now let me ask him to consider what it is, that he *thinks;* not what are the words he uses, but what are his actual conceptions. If he conceives of only one God, one Infinite mind; and then if all that he means by the Trinity is, that the Saviour and the Holy Spirit partook, in some sense, of the nature of God; this is nothing materially different from what we all believe. If he means that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are only representations of the same God, acting

* I mean no offence by this designation of the parties. If the words, Orthodox and Liberal, be taken in a literal sense, then, of course, I claim to be orthodox, and I do not deny that others are liberal. But I take the terms as they are used in common parlance; and I prefix them to this series of articles, because no other cover the whole ground of the discussion. In any view, if others assume the title of Orthodox, I think *they* cannot charge us with presumption, if *we adopt the title of Liberal.*

in three characters, then he is not a Trinitarian, but a Sabellian. But if he goes farther, and attempts to grasp the real doctrine of the Trinity; if he attempts to conceive of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as possessing each a distinct existence, consciousness and volition, as holding counsel and covenant with each other; then, though he may call these Three one, though he may repeat it to himself all the day long, that they are but one; yet does he actually conceive of them as three agents, three beings, three Gods? The human mind, I aver, is so constituted, that it *cannot* conceive of three agents, sustaining to each other the relations asserted by the doctrine of the Trinity, without conceiving of them as three Gods.

Let the reader keep his mind free from all confusion on this point, arising from Christ's incarnation, or adoption of human nature. *Before* that event, the distinction is held by Trinitarians to be just as marked as it is now. Then it was that the Father covenanted with the Son. Then it was, that the Son offered to assume human nature, and not the Father. Then it was, that the Father promised to the Son that he should "see the travail of his soul and be satisfied." Then it was that the Father sent the Son into the world. Is it possible for any human mind to contemplate these relations, without conceiving of those between whom they existed, as two distinct, self-conscious Beings? I aver that it is not. The Father, by supposition, must have known that he was not the Son. The Son must have known that he was not the Father. Two, who speak to one another, who confer together; the one of whom commissions, the other is commissioned; the one of whom sends the other into the world; these two are, to every human mind so contemplating them, and are in spite of itself,

two beings. If not, then there is nothing in the universe answering to the idea of two beings. We all partake of a common humanity; and it might just as well be maintained that all *men* are one being, as that the three in the Trinity are one being.

In simple truth, I do not see why any reader on this subject need go farther than this. Till something credible is offered to be proved; till something better than absolute self-contradiction is proposed as a matter of belief; who is bound to attend to the argument?

I mean no discourtesy nor injustice to the Trinitarian, unless argument shall be thought such. I know that he supposes himself to hold a theory, which escapes from the charge of self-contradiction. But so long as he says that the Father sent the Son, and that these two are one and the same being, I believe that he does not and cannot escape from it. I know that he professes to believe in one God; and in truth, in all his practical and devotional thoughts; whenever he prays to the Father *through* the Son, he is, and his mind compels him to be, *virtually a Unitarian.* And this doubtless is, and always has been, the state of the general mind. Practical Unitarianism has always been the general faith of Christendom. Even when, as in the Roman Church, and sometimes in the Protestant, men have prayed to Jesus Christ, it would be found, if their thoughts could be confessed, that they have forgotten the Father for the time, and their error has not consisted in Tritheism, but in clothing the being, called Jesus, with the attributes of sole Divinity. Still, though erring, they have been practical Unitarians. But scholastic men have always been weaving theories, at variance with the popular and effective belief. Half of the history of philosophy might be written in illustration of this single point. Such a

theory, I conceive, is the Trinity. It has existed in studies, in creeds, in theses, in words; but not in the actual conceptions of men, not in their heartfelt belief. From the days when Tertullian complained in the second century, that the common people would not receive this doctrine, and down through all the ages of seeming assent, and to this very day, I believe that it has ever been the same dead letter. And when Christianity has fairly thrown off this incumbrance, as I believe it will, I have no doubt that many will say, what not a few are saying now, "We never did believe in the Trinity; we always felt that the Son was inferior to the Father who sent him."

But how then, I may be asked, does it come to pass, that this doctrine is honestly and earnestly maintained by a great many able and learned men, to be accordant with the teachings of Scripture? Because, I answer, that, on a certain theory of interpretation, there is a great deal of proof for it from Scripture; while upon another and true principle, I firmly believe that there is none at all.

Let me invite the reader's attention, for a few moments, to the consideration of this point; the *true* principle of interpretation. My own conviction is, that it settles the whole question; but at any rate, I cannot, in this cursory view which I am taking, go over the ground of the whole argument; and therefore I shall confine myself to the most material point at issue.

We must all have seen by this time—indeed, I think the whole Christian world must have perceived, how impossible it is to settle any question from the Scriptures, by bare textual discussion. Texts may be arrayed against texts, and have been for ages, and might be, from *any* mass of writings like the Scriptures; they might be, and have been, thus arrayed by the parties

to every religious controversy, with very little tendency to produce conviction, so long as the true principle of their interpretation was disregarded. So long as texts are considered by themselves alone, considered as independent passages, uncontrolled by any such principle, one text is as good as another; and thus Christian sects have presented the strange anomaly,—the wonder of observers, the scorn of infidels—of being directly at issue on the clearest points of Christian doctrine, all armed with proof passages, all equally confident, and all with equal assurance condemning each other.

What is to account for this phenomenon? There are other causes, indeed, but I am persuaded that the main cause lies in the peculiarity of treatment to which the Scriptures have been subjected. There is doubtless a superstructure of passion, prejudice, pride and worldly interest; but resting ostensibly, as it does, on the Scriptures, there must be some error touching the very interpretation of them.

Let me now more distinctly state, what are the two principles or theories of interpretation, by which it is proposed to explain the language of Scripture on this subject. For the Trinitarian has his theory, his humanly devised theory, and his reasoning, and what he considers his rational principle of exposition, as much as the Unitarian. The difference is not, though it is often alleged, that the Unitarian relies more upon reasoning, independent of Scripture; but, as I conceive, that he relies upon a more rational, a more natural, and a really sounder principle of interpretation. The Trinitarian says,—"Here are two classes of passages, —those which describe an *inferior*, and those which describe a *superior* nature. We receive both classes without admitting any qualification, or limitation of sense in either. One class of texts ascribes human

qualities to Jesus; therefore, he is man; another ascribes divine works and offices; therefore, he is God; and we dare not explain them into what we might imagine to be a consistency with each other, as we should any other history, concerning any other person. We receive the contrasted portions of this history just as they stand; holding it to be not our business to explain, but only to believe."

By this theory, undoubtedly, the Trinity can be proved. By this theory a *double nature* in Christ can be proved. And by this theory, do I seriously aver that Transubstantiation, Anthropomorphism, and irreconcilable contradictions in the divine nature can be proved. Transubstantiation; the doctrine that the sacramental bread and wine are the real body and blood of Christ; for while, in one class of passages, these elements are called bread and wine; in another, doth not our Saviour say, "this is my body—this is my blood?" Anthropomorphism; for while we are taught that God is a spirit, is he not said to have hands, eyes; to walk on the earth, &c.? Irreconcilable contradictions in his nature; for while we are taught that God is unchangeable, is he not represented as repenting, that he had made man; repenting, that he had made Saul king? Upon what principle is it, that such monstrous conclusions are avoided? Upon a principle, I answer, that is fatal to the Trinitarian theory of interpretation. It is the principle that words are not to be taken by themselves in the Bible; that limitations and qualifications in their meaning must be admitted, in order to make any sense; that the Scriptures are, in this respect, to be interpreted like other books; that when human language is adopted as the instrument of a divine communication, it may fairly be presumed that it is subject to the laws of that instrument; and

that no other principle of criticism can save the Bible, or any other book, from the imputation of utter absurdity and folly.

This I understand to be the Unitarian theory of interpretation. The reader will perceive at once that just this difference of theory will bring out precisely the difference of results, that characterize these two classes of believers. Which, then, is the true theory?

It seems to me that the case speaks for itself; that all common sense, all usage, all criticism, all tolerable commentary on the Bible, sufficiently declares which is the right principle.

But let us appeal to undeniable authority; that of the sacred teachers themselves; that of the Bible interpreting itself.

For the application of our principle of interpretation to the very subject before us, we have the authority of Jesus Christ himself; and the application is as clear and decisive, as the appeal, with every Christian, must be final and ultimate. I allude to that most extraordinary passage, in John x. 30—36; most extraordinary I mean in reference to this controversy: and I propose to make it the subject of considerable comment and argument.

What is the question, in the passage here referred to? I answer, the very question, which is now virtually before us; did Jesus claim to be God? What was the language of our Saviour? "God is my Father: I and my Father are one." What was the accusation of the Jews? "Thou blasphemest, and, being a man, makest thyself God:" the very allegation on which Trinitarianism is founded. It was once a cavil: it is now a creed. And now I ask, in the name of reason and truth and Scripture, how does our Saviour treat it? His answer, be *it remembered*, in the first place, is a

solemn and absolute *denial* of the allegation, that he had made himself God! "Jesus answered them, is it not written in your law, I said ye are gods? If he called them Gods to whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?" Our Saviour had used strong language concerning himself. He had said, "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father;" referring, however, as I suppose, not to the extent, but the certainty of the knowledge. He had said, "I and my father are one. Then the Jews took up stones to cast at him;" they accused him of blasphemy; they said, "thou makest thyself God." Jesus denies that the language he had used warrants the inference they drew from it. This is the second point. He denies their inference. He clearly implies, moreover, that stronger language still would not warrant the inference. He tells the cavilling Jews, that even those "to whom the word of God came" had been "called gods." And then, so far from declaring himself to be God, he speaks of himself as one whom God "had sanctified and sent into the world;" and as, on that account, entitled to speak of himself in exalted terms.

And yet, how astonishing is it, we may observe, by the by, that this very language, "I and my Father are one," concerning which, and much stronger language too, he had declared its insufficiency to prove him God; this very language, I say, and other similar phraseology, is constantly quoted to prove the Supreme Deity of the Son of God! Words, once caught up by gainsayers, and by them wrested into a charge against our Saviour, of assuming Divinity, and denied by him to be any legitimate proof of such an allegation, now help to

support the faith of multitudes in this very allegation, as a portion, and a most essential portion, of the Christian doctrine!

I say that our Saviour appeals to a principle of interpretation. Those, in ancient times, "to whom the word of God came," were men, ordinary men; and when they were called gods, this language was limited in its force by their known character. No one could think of taking this language for what it meant by itself considered, and without any qualification. But our Saviour was an extraordinary personage, and he argues that words of much loftier import might be applied to him, without furnishing any warrant for the inference, that he was God; and he absolutely contradicts the inference.

Let us now apply in another way the reasoning with which our Saviour confounded the Jews.

I suppose it will be admitted that the words "I and my Father are one," do not prove our Saviour to be God; since he himself expressly disallows the inference. Now, is there any language in the Bible concerning Christ, that is stronger than this? Is there any of all the proof texts, that is stronger? I confess that I know of none. This is the very language of the popular creed; not that the Father and the Son are two Gods, but that they are one. And so exactly does it express the Orthodox belief, that *notwithstanding* our Saviour's disclamation, it is constantly used to convey the idea that he was God. His disclamation, however, settles the matter entirely. And I suppose that an intelligent reasoner on the Trinitarian side, would say,—"It is true the words here used do not prove Jesus to be God. Still, however, he may be God. He was reasoning with the Jews on a particular charge. The charge was, that *he had, by the language he used*, made

himself God. He simply denies that this particular language warrants their inference. "Is not this, however, at the least, a very extraordinary supposition? It makes our Saviour say with himself, "True, I *am* God, and being so, I have used language very naturally expressive of that fact. However, I can reason it away with these people, on the ground of their own Scriptures, and I will do so. I *am* God, indeed; but I will deny this inference of the Jews, though it amounts to the exact truth. I will deny it, though I thereby mislead them altogether and infinitely, as to my true character." This, I say, would be our Saviour's reasoning with himself on the Trinitarian hypothesis. But the truth is, this supposition, improper and incredible as it is, will not save the doctrine. Because this language, which our Saviour declares insufficient to prove him God, is, in fact, as strong as any language that the advocates of that doctrine adduce. If this language does not fairly prove him to be God, then no language in the Bible does.

Let us suppose, to put this in another form, that the New Testament in all its doctrinal parts; that is to say, that the Epistles had been written, and all had been completed before our Saviour's death; and that our Trinitarians could have said to him after the manner of the Jews, "Thy disciples whom thou hast commissioned to declare the truth, make thee to be God." I conceive that Jesus might have given the same answer as he did to his Jewish accusers. He would say, "No; in all writings it is common to speak of men according to their distinction; nor is there any need, on the principles of ordinary interpretation and sense, of guarding and restraining the natural language of admiration and love. The ancient Jews were called gods, because the word of God came to them. And

I, *on account of my Messiahship*, may properly be spoken of, and spoken of *in that character*, much more strongly."

But, to bind the argument more closely, and to render it, as I think, incontrovertible, let me add, that the matter which I now state is not a matter of supposition, but of fact. Jesus *is* spoken of, and that frequently, *in his simple character of Messiah;* that is to say, *as* inferior, as confessedly inferior, as an *official* person he is spoken of as strongly as he is anywhere. Observe the following language—"For by him were all things created that are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers, all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." There is no stronger language than this. And yet, for all this, Jesus is represented as dependant on the good pleasure of God. "*For*—*for* it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." I suppose this to be that moral creation, that creating anew of many souls, which Jesus by his doctrine has effected, together with that influence upon the visible kingdoms of the world, which his doctrine has unquestionably produced. Again: we read of Jesus Christ as being "far above principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come;" and again, I say, there is no stronger language than this. But it is expressly said, that God "SET him above all principality," &c. How directly are we led back from these passages, to our Saviour's principle of interpretation! And as if there should be no doubt about the subordinate and temporary character of this distinction, high as it was, we are expressly told, that "when the end shall come;" when, according to the

Trinitarian hypothesis, we expect to see Jesus ascend to his primeval dignity as God; when "all things shall be subdued unto him," lo! "then shall he be subject unto him that put all things under him; that God may be all in all." And as if to warrant the very principle of interpretation, on which I am insisting; as if to show that nothing, that is said of the glory of our Saviour, is to be taken in derogation from the supremacy of God, it is said in this very connection, "But when it is said, *all* things are put under him, *it is manifest* that He is excepted who did put all things under him." As if it were said; nay it is said, that nothing written concerning the greatness of Jesus is to bring into question the unrivalled supremacy of God.

And let me add, that this provides us with an answer to the only objection that stands in our way. It may be said, that there are still passages, whose force is not controlled by any express qualification. I answer that it *is* nevertheless fairly controlled by the general sense of the book. The certain truth, that there is but one God; the constant ascription of that supremacy to the Father, the constant declaration, that Jesus owed everything to God, justly limits the sense of those passages which ascribe to the Saviour a lofty distinction. This is according to the usage of all writings. Suppose that when the biographer had said of Bonaparte, that "his footstep shook the Continent," or of Mr. Pitt, that he "struck a blow in Europe, that resounded through the world," or the poet, of Milton,—

> "He passed the flaming bounds of space and time,
> The living throne, the sapphire-blaze;"

suppose, I say, that he immediately added, and in every such instance added, that he did not mean to be taken literally—that he did not mean that the person-

age in question was a demi-god; could anything be more unnatural and unnecessary? Were any writings ever composed upon this plan?

What then is the conclusion at which we arrive? The very objection which we are considering, in fact, gives up the whole argument. For it is admitted by this objection, that *if* the qualification had been constantly introduced; that is to say, if *every time* that any lofty distinction had been ascribed to Jesus, it had been expressly said that "God gave him this," that "God had set him there:" it is admitted, I say, that by this constantly repeated qualification, the whole Trinitarian argument would have been completely overthrown. Is it possible then, for the Trinitarian expositor, interpreting the Bible on the same principle that he does other books, to maintain his argument? If he does maintain it, I fearlessly assert, that he gives up the principle. The moment he feels the Trinitarian ground strong beneath him, that moment he abjures the principle in his exposition; that moment he begins to say, "It is profane to interpret the Scriptures, as we do other books, the Scripture biography, as we do other biographies."

The fact is, and I must assert it, that the Trinitarian, with all his assumptions of exclusive reverence for the Bible, does *not* adhere to the Bible as his opponent does. If he would vindicate his claim, I should be glad to see a little more regard for Scripture usage in his doxologies and ascriptions. From all pulpits, at the close of almost every prayer, may be heard, on any Sunday, *formulas* of expression like these; nowhere to be found in the Bible; "And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory:" "To the holy and ever-blessed Trinity; one God, the Father

Son, and Holy Ghost, be equal and undivided honours and praises."

And yet those who pass upon us such unscriptural theories, as we think them, and are constantly swaying the public mind, by using such confessedly unscriptural language, are, at the same time, perpetually charging us with rejecting the Bible and relying on our presumptuous reasonings, and with leaning, and more than leaning, to infidelity.

I repeat, in close, that the question between us is a question of interpretation. It is a question of "what saith the Scripture?" It amounts to nothing in view of this question, to tell me, that for many centuries the church has, in the body of it, believed this or that doctrine. The church, by the confession of us all, has believed many errors, for many centuries. It is worse yet, contemptuously or haughtily to say, that it is unlikely, any great or new truth in religion is now to be found out. Such a principle would stop the progress of the age. Such a principle would have crushed the Reformation. Neither is our doctrine new, nor is it unhonoured, so far as human testimony can confer honour. It was the doctrine, as we firmly believe, of the primitive church. It has been held by many good men ever since. And when you come upon English ground; when you retrace the bright lineage of our English worthies, to whom do all eyes turn as the brightest in that line? Whose names have become household words, in all the dwellings of a reading and intelligent community? I answer, the names of Newton, and Locke, and Milton. And yet Newton, who not only read the stars; and Locke, who not only penetrated with patient study the secrets of the mind; and Milton, who not only soared into the heaven of *poetry, and* "passed the sapphire blaze, and saw the

living throne;" all of whom read their Bibles too, and wrote largely upon the Scriptures; all these, after laborious investigation, concurred in rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity. What these men believed, is not to be accounted of mushroom growth. They were men not of parts and genius only, but men of solid and transcendant acquisitions and ever-during fame. I would not name them in the spirit of vain and foolish boasting. But I do say, and I would urge this consideration particularly; I do say, that the extraordinary circumstance, that these three men have been as distinguished for their study of the Bible, as they have been otherwise distinguished among the great and learned men of England, should lead every man to pause, before he rejects a doctrine which they believed. Much more does it become men of inferior parts and little learning, to abstain from pouring out contempt and anathemas upon a doctrine which Newton, and Locke, and Milton believed.

It is to little purpose, indeed, to lift up warnings and denunciations, and to awaken prejudice and hostility against the great doctrine on which Unitarianism is built, the simple Unity of God; and the entire inferiority, yet glorious distinction, of Jesus, as his Son and Messenger. This doctrine professes to stand securely on the foundation of Scripture. Argument, therefore, not passion, must supply the only effectual weapons against it. If this doctrine be wrong, may God speedily show it! If it be right, he will defend the right. Concerning all improper opposition, we might say to its opponents, in the words of Gamaliel, "Let it alone: for if this counsel, or this work, be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye *cannot* overthrow it: lest haply ye be found, even to fight against God."

II.

ON THE ATONEMENT.

For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.—1 Cor. ii. 2.

THE preëminence thus assigned to one subject of Christian teaching, the sufferings of Jesus, must command for it our serious attention. It is true that Paul did *not* mean to say, that he would not speak of anything but the passion of Christ; for he did speak of many other things. But it is quite clear that he did give to this subject, in the Christian system, an importance, preëminent; predominating over all others.

Why did he so? Why is the death of Jesus the highest subject in Christianity? Why is the cross the chiefest emblem of Christianity? Why has something like Paul's determination always been realized in the Christian church; to know nothing else? Why has it been celebrated, as nothing else has been celebrated? Why has a holy rite been especially ordained to show forth the death of Christ through all time? The brief answer to these questions is, that the substance, the subject-matter of Christianity, is the character of Christ, as the Saviour of men; and that the grandest revelation of his character and purpose was made on the cross. Of this revelation I am now to speak.

In entering upon this subject I feel one serious difficulty. It has taken such hold of the superstition of *mankind, that* it is difficult to present it in its true,

simple, natural and affecting aspects. For this reason, I shall not attempt to engage your minds in the ordinary course of a doctrinal discussion. I *cannot* discuss this solemn theme in a merely metaphysical manner. I cannot contemplate a death, and least of all the death of the Saviour, only as a doctrine. It is to me, I must confess, altogether another kind of influence. It is to me, if it is anything, power and grandeur; it is something that rivets my eye and heart; it is a theme of admiration and spiritual sympathy; it leads me to meditation, not to metaphysics; it is as a majestic example, a moving testimony, a dread sacrifice, that I must contemplate it. I see in it a death-blow to sin; I hear the pleading of the crucified One for truth and salvation, beneath the darkened heavens and amidst the shuddering earth!

I mean to say, that all this is spiritual and practical. It amazes me, that this great event, which is filling all lands and all ages, should be resolved altogether, all gathered and stamped into a formula of faith. It is every way astonishing to me, that such a speculative use should have been made of it; that suffering should have been seized upon as a subject for metaphysical analysis; that the agony of the Son of God should have been wrested into a thesis for the theologian; that a death should have been made a dogma; that blood should have been taken to write a creed; that Calvary should have been made the arena of controversy. That the cross, whereon Jesus, with holy candour and meekness, prayed for his enemies, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" that the cross should have been made a rack of moral torture for his friends, whereon, in all the valleys and upon all the hills of Christendom, they have been crucified by unkindness *and exclusion; is* there another such con-

tradiction; is there another such phenomenon to be found, in all the strange history of the world? There have been martyrdoms recorded in the world's great story; but when before were martyrdoms wrought into sharp and reproachful metaphysics? There have been fields drenched with righteous blood; there have been lowly and lonely valleys, like those of Piedmont and Switzerland, where the sighs and groans of the crushed and bleeding have risen and echoed among the dark crags that surrounded them; but who ever thought of building up these dread testimonies of human suffering and fortitude, into systems of doctrinal speculation?

Let me not be misunderstood. In the train of the world's history, as I follow it, I meet at length with a being, marked and singled out from all others. I read, in the Gospel, the wonderful account of the most wonderful personage, that ever appeared on earth. Nothing, in the great procession of ages, ever bore any comparison with the majestic story that now engages my attention. I draw near and listen to this being, and he speaks as never man spake. By some strange power, which I never so felt before, he seems as no other master ever did, to speak to *me*. I follow him, as the course of his life leads me on. I become deeply interested, more than as for a friend, in everything he says, and does, and suffers. I feel the natural amazement at the resistance and hatred he meets with. I feel a rising glow in my cheek, at the indignities that are heaped upon him. I say with myself, "Surely, God will interpose for him!" I hear him speak obscurely of a death by violence; but, like the disciples, I cannot receive it. I look, rather, that some horses and chariots of fire, shall come and bear him up to heaven. But the scene darkens around him; more and more frequently fall *from his lips, the* sad monitions of coming sorrow; he

prepares a feast of friendship with his disciples, but he tells them that it is the last; he retires thence to the shades of Gethsemane; and lo! through those silent shades comes the armed band; he is taken with wicked hands; he is borne to the Judgment-Hall; he is invested with a bloody crown of thorns, and made to bear his cross amidst a jeering and insulting multitude; he is stretched upon that accursed tree; he expires in agony. Oh! where are now the hopes, that he would do some great thing for the world! He seemed as one, who would save the world, and lo! he is crucified and slain! He seemed to hold in his bosom the great regenerative principle; he knew what was in man and what man wanted; he appeared as the hope of the world; and where now is that hope? Buried, intombed, quenched in the dark and silent sepulchre. All is over; all, to my worldly view, is ended. I wander away from the scene in hopeless despair. I fall in company, as the narrative leads me on, with two of the scattered disciples going to Emmaus. And as we talk of these things, one joins us in our walk, and asks us what are these sad communings of ours. And we say, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he says, what things? And we answer, concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Then expounds he to us the Scriptures; and says, ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" In fine, he reveals himself unto us, and then vanishes away. And we say, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

In short, it is at this point, that a new view enters my mind of the sufferings of Jesus. The worldly views all pass *away; the* worldly views of death and

defeat, of ignominy and ruin; and I see that through death it was, that Jesus conquered. I see that his dying, even more than his living, is a ministration of power, and light, and salvation to the world. I see that that ignominy is glory; that those wounds are fountains of healing; that the cross, hitherto branded as the accursed tree, fit only for the execution of the vilest culprits, has become the emblem of everlasting honour.

Now, therefore, the death of Jesus becomes to me the one great revelation. I determine to know nothing else; nothing in comparison with it; nothing is of equal interest. All the glory of Christ's example, all the graciousness of his purposes, shines most brightly on the cross. It is the consummation of all, the finishing of all. The epitaph of Jesus, is the epitome of Christianity. The death of Jesus, is the life of the world.

In saying this, I wish to utter no theological dogma, which shall be respectfully received as a mere dogma. I simply express what is, upon my own mind, the natural impression. I stand by the cross of Jesus; for no intervening ages can weaken the power of that manifestation; and what is its language to me? I will suppose myself to stand alone by that cross; I will suppose that I have never heard of any theological systems; I stand in the simplicity of the elder time, before any systems were invented. And what now is the first feeling that enters my mind, as I gaze upon that Sufferer?

1. I think I shall state the natural impression, taking into account all that I have known of Jesus, when I say that the first feeling is, that I am a sinner. It is ever the tendency of human guilt, on witnessing any great catastrophe, to exclaim, "I am a sinner." But this is

not a catastrophe without an explanation. Let us see if my feeling is not right. I have heard all that Jesus has said of the supreme evil, that sin is. I have seen how that one conviction rested upon his mind, and breathed out in all his teachings, that nothing beside is comparatively an evil. I have seen that it was on this very account, that he came on a mission of pity from the Father of mercies. I have heard all that he has said; my heart has been probed by his words, and I involuntarily exclaim, as I see him suspended on the cross, "Ah! sinful being that I am; that such an one should suffer for me. It is I that deserved to suffer; but God hath made him the propitiation for my sins. Could nothing else set forth before me the curse of sin? Could no other hand bear the burden of my redemption? Truly, I have sinned against the gracious Father of my existence; I always knew it; I always felt that I had; but how is it shown to me now, when the love and pity of the infinite Father appears in this; that he spared not his own Son, but gave him to die for me. Oh! sore and bitter to abide are pains and wounds; cherished in heaven are the sufferings of martyred innocence! how then does every pain of Jesus awaken the pain of conscious guilt in my mind! how does every wound reveal a deeper wound in my soul! I will repent me now, if I never would before. I will resist, I can resist no longer. I will be crucified to sin, and sin shall be crucified to me. I will bathe the cross of Jesus with the tears of penitence. God, who hast interposed for me, help me to die daily unto sin, and to live unto righteousness!"

It is in this connexion, if anywhere, that we must give a few moments' attention to the doctrinal explanation of the atonement. I have indeed remonstrated against the speculative use of this subject, but the state

of the public mind makes it necessary, perhaps, that something should be said of the theory of the atonement.

I understand this, then, to be the state of the question. Two leading views of the sacrifice of Christ divide the Christian world. The one regards it as an expedient; the other as a manifestation. According to the first view, the sacrifice of Christ is usually represented either as the suffering of a penalty, or as the payment of a debt, or as the satisfaction of a law. It is something that either turns God's favour towards us, or makes it proper for him to show favour. It is some new element, or some new expedient introduced into the divine government, without which it is impossible to obtain forgiveness. This, I understand to be, in general and in substance, the Calvinistic view. The other view regards the suffering of Christ, as simply a manifestation. It is not a purchase, or procurement, but a manifestation of God's love and pity and willingness to forgive. It is not the enfranchisement, from some legal bond, of God's mercy; but the expression, the out-flowing of that mercy which was forever free. It was a satisfaction not to the heart of reluctant justice, but of abounding grace. The divine displeasure against sin, indeed, was manifested; for how costly was the sacrifice for its removal; but not a displeasure that must burn against the sinner till some expedient was found to avert it.

Now the view of manifestation is the one which we adopt; and certainly many of the more modern Orthodox explanations come to the same thing. They still proceed, it is true, upon the presumption that this manifestation was intrinsically necessary; that sin could not have been forgiven without it; that the authority of God's law could not have been otherwise upholden. I

certainly cannot take this view of the subject. I cannot undertake to say what it was possible or proper for the Almighty to do. I can only wonder at the presumption of those, who do profess thus to penetrate into the fathomless counsels of the Infinite Government. I read in the Gospel, it is true, of a necessity for the sufferings of Christ; but I understand it to be founded in prophecy, which must be fulfilled; founded in the moral purposes of his mission; founded in the wisdom of God. I read, that God is the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, of him that is penitent and regenerate; that is, God treats him as if he were just; in other words, shows favour to him; bestows pardon and mercy upon him. And of this mercy Jesus, the sufferer, is the great and all-subduing manifestation.

I cannot here go into the details of Interpretation. It is perplexed by reasonings of the Apostles about the relations of Jews and Gentiles, by analogies to the Jewish sacrifices, by the language and speculations of an ancient time; by difficulties, in short, that require much study and learning for their clearing up, and demand *no* solution at the hand of plain and unlearned persons, who are simply seeking for their salvation. This profound criticism, in short, is a subject for a volume, rather than for a sermon.

But I will present to you, in accordance with a frequent practice of theologians, a single illustration, which, if you will carry into the New Testament, you will see, I believe, that it explains most of the language you will find there.

Suppose, then, that a father, in a distant part of the country, had a family of sons, all dear to him. Suppose that all of them, save one, who remained at home with him, had wandered away into the world to seek their fortunes, and that in the prosecution of that de-

sign, they had come to one of our cities. Suppose that, in process of time, they yield to the temptations that surround them, and become dissolute and abandoned, and are sunk into utter misery; first one, and then another, till all are fallen. From time to time, dark and vague rumours had gone back to their country-home, that all was not well; and their parent had been anxious and troubled. He thought of it in sleepless nights; but what could he do? He desired one and another of his neighbours, going down to the great city, to see his sons, and tell him of their estate. On their return they speak to him in those reserved and doubtful terms, that sear a parent's heart: one messenger after another speaks in this manner; till at length, evasion is no longer possible, and the father learns the dreadful truth, that his sons are sunk into the depths of vice, debasement, and wretchedness. Then, at last, he says to his only remaining, and beloved son, "Go, and save thy brethren." Let me observe to you here, that nothing is more common in the books of Divinity, than comparisons of this nature; and that it is not, of course, designed to imply anything in such comparisons of the relative rank of the parties. The father says, "Go, and save thy brethren." Moved by compassion, that son comes to the great city. He seeks his unhappy brethren in their miserable haunts; he labours for their recovery. Ere long, a fearful pestilence spreads itself in the city. Shall the heroic brother desist from his task? No; he labours on; night and day he labours; till, in the noisome abodes of vice, poverty and misery, he takes the infectious disease, and dies. He dies for the salvation of his brethren.

Now what is the language of this sacrifice on the part of the father, what is it on the part of the son, and

what is it to those unhappy objects of this interposition?

On the part of the father, it was unspeakable compassion. It was also, constructively, an expression of his displeasure against vice; of the sense he entertained of the evil into which his sons had fallen. On the part of the son, it was a like conviction and compassion, and a willingness to die for the recovery of his brethren. What would it be to those guilty brethren? What would it be especially, if by dying for them, he recovered them to virtue, restored them to their father's arms, and to a happy life? "Ah! our brother," they would say; "He died for us; he died that we might live. His blood has cleansed us from sin. By his stripes, by his groans, by his pains, we are healed. Dearly beloved brother! we will live in memory of thy virtues, and in honour of thy noble sacrifice." Nor, my friends, is there one word of reliance or gratitude in the New Testament applied to the sacrifice of Jesus, which persons thus circumstanced, and with a Jewish education, would not apply to just such an interposition as we have supposed. If, then, we have put a case which meets and satisfies all the Scriptural language to be explained, have we not put a case that embraces the essential features of the great atonement?

II. I have now spoken of the relation of the cross of Christ to our sins, and to the pardon of sin. But we should by no means have exhausted its efficacy, we should by no means have shown all the reasons of its preëminence in the Christian dispensation, if we were to stop here. Not less practical, not less momentous is its relation to our deliverance from sin. That, indeed, is its ultimate end, and pardon is to be obtained only on that *condition*. This idea, indeed, has been

essentially involved in what we have already said; but it requires yet further to be unfolded.

The death of Jesus is the greatest ministration ever known on earth to human virtue. It was intended not to be a relief to the conscience, but an incentive, a goad to the negligent conscience.

It was not meant, because Christ has died, that men should roll the burden of their sin on him, and be at ease; but that, more than ever, they should struggle with it themselves. It was designed that the cross should lay a stronger bond upon the conscience, even than the law. When I look upon the cross, I cannot indulge, my brethren, in sentimental or theologic strains of rapture, over reliefs and escapes; over the broken bonds of legal obligation; over a salvation wrought out *for* me, and not *in* me; over a purchased and claimed pardon; as if now all were easy, as if a commutation were made with justice; the debt paid, the debtor free; and there were nothing to do, but to rejoice and triumph. No; I should feel it to be base and ungenerous in me, thus to contemplate sufferings and agonies endured for my salvation. The cross is a most majestic and touching revelation of solemn and bounden duty. It makes the bond stronger, not weaker. It reveals a harder, not an easier way to be saved. That is to say, it sets up a stricter, not a looser law for the conscience. Every particle of evil in the heart, is now a more lamentable and gloomy burden, than it ever was before. The cross sets a darker stamp upon the malignity of sin, than the table of the commandments; and it demands of us, in accents louder than Sinai's thunder, sympathetic agonies to be freed from sin.

The cross, I repeat, is the grand ministration to human virtue. It is a language to all lonely and neg-

lected, or slighted and persecuted virtue. Often do we stand in situations where that cross is our dearest example and friend. It is, perhaps, beneath the humble roof, where the great world passes us by, and neither sees nor knows us; where no one blazons our patience, our humility, cheerfulness and disinterestedness, to the multitude that is ever dazzled with outward splendour. There must we learn of him, who for us was a neglected wanderer, and had not even where to lay his head. There must we learn of him, who was meek and lowly in heart, and find rest unto our souls. There must we learn of him, who bowed that meek and lowly head upon the cross; dishonoured before a passing multitude, honoured before all ages. Or we stand, perhaps, beneath the perilous eye of observation, of an observation not friendly, but hostile and scornful. We stand up for our integrity: we stand for some despised and persecuted principle in religion, or morals, or science. And it is hard to bear opprobrium and injury for this; hard for the noblest testimony of our conscience, to bear the worst infliction of human displeasure. The dissenting physician, the dissenting philanthropist, the dissenting Christian, knows full well how hard it is. And there, keeping there our firm stand, must we look upon that cross, whereon hung one who was despised and rejected of men; the scorned of earth, the favoured and beloved of heaven. That stand for conscience, kept firmly, humbly, meekly, we must learn, is not mean and low; it is the very grandeur of life; it is the magnificence of the world. It is a world of misconstruction, of injury, of persecution: that cross is lifted up to stay our fainting courage, to fix our wavering fidelity, to inspire us with meekness, patience, forgiveness of enemies, and trust in God.

Again, the cross is a language to *all* tempted and struggling virtue. Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. Thou too art tempted. In high estate as well as in low, thou art tempted. Nay, and the misery and peril of the case is, that all estates are becoming low with thee; all is sinking around thee, when temptation presses thee sore. When thou art tempted to swerve from the integrity of thy spirit or of thy life, and the perilous hour draws near, and thou reasonest with thyself, thou art in a kind of despair. Thou sayest that friends desert thee, and the world looks coldly on thee; or thou sayest that thy passions are strong, and thy soul is sad, and thy state is unhappy, and it is no matter what befalls. Then it is, that to thy tempted and discouraged virtue Jesus speaks, and says, "Deny the evil thought, and take up thy cross and follow me. Behold my agony, behold my desertion, behold the drops of bloody sweat; I shrink in the fraily of nature, as thou dost, from the cup of bitterness; I pray that it may pass from me; but I do not refuse it. There is worse to fear than pain,—*guilt;* failure in the great trial; the prostration of all thy nobleness before the base appliance of a moment's gratification; ay, the pain of all thy after life, for an hour's pleasure. Learn of me, that virtue does not always repose on a bed of roses. Oh! no; sharp pangs; sharp nails; piercing thorns, are for me; wonder not thou, then, at the fiery trial in thy soul; my sufferings emblem thine, so let my triumph: all can be endured for victory, holy victory, immortal victory."

Once more; the cross appeals to all heroic and lofty virtue. Let me say heroic; though that word is scarcely yet found in the Christian's vocabulary. But in the Christian's life there is to be a heroism. He is

to feel as one who has undertaken a lofty enterprise. He has entered upon a sublime work. It is his being's task, and trial, and triumph. We think too poorly of what a Christian life is. We hold it to be too commonplace. There is nothing heroic or lofty, as to the principle, in all history, in all the majestic fortunes of humanity, but is to come into the silent strife of every Christian's spirit.

Now to this, the example of the crucified Saviour, is an emphatic appeal. The cross is commonly represented as humbling to the human heart; it is so to the worldly pride of the human heart; but it is also to that heart, an animating, soul-thrilling, ennobling call. It speaks to all that is sacred, disinterested, self-sacrificing in humanity. I fear that we regard Christ's sacrifice for us so technically, that we rob it of its vital import. It *was* a painful sacrifice for us, as truly as if our brother had died for us; it was a bitter and bloody propitiation, to bring back offending man to his God; it was a groan for human guilt and misery that rent the earth; it was a death endured for us, that we might live, and live forever. I speak not one word of this technically; I speak vital truth. Even if Jesus had died as any other martyr dies; if he had thought of nothing but his own fidelity, had thought of nothing, but bearing witness to the truth; still the call would, *by inference*, have come to us. But it is not left to inference. Jesus was commissioned to bear this very relation to the world. He knew that if he were lifted up, he should draw all men to him. And how draw all men to him? Plainly, in sympathy, in imitation, in love. He designed to speak to all ages, to touch all the high and solemn aspirations of unnumbered millions of souls; to win the world to the noble spirit of self-sacrifice; to disinterestedness, and fortitude, and

patience; to meekness and candour, and gentleness and forgiveness of injuries. This is the heroism of Christianity. In these virtues, centres all true glory. This did Jesus mean to illustrate. His purpose was, to turn off the eyes of men from the power, pride, ambition and splendour of the world, to the true grandeur, dignity and all-sufficing good of love, meekness and disinterestedness. And how surely have his purposes and predictions been accomplished! A renovating power has gone forth from him upon the face of the whole civilized world, and is fast spreading itself to the ends of the earth. And one emphatic proof of this is, that the cross, before the stigma of the vilest crimes, has become the emblem of all spiritual greatness.

At the risk of wearying your patience, my brethren, let me invite you to a brief consideration of one other relation of the cross of Christ; I mean its relation to human happiness. It shall be a closing and a brief one.

Jesus was a sufferer: and yet so filled was his mind with serenity and joy, that the single instance, in which we read that he wept, seems to open to us a new light upon his character. Jesus was a patient, cheerful, triumphant sufferer. The interest, which in this light his character possesses for the whole human race, has never, it appears to me, been sufficiently illustrated.

We are all sufferers. At one time or another, in one way or another, we all meet this fate of humanity. So true is this, and so well do we know it to be true, that it would be only too painful to open the wide volume of proofs which life is continually furnishing. It is really necessary to lay restraint upon our thoughts, when speaking of the pains and afflictions of life. I know it is often said, that the pulpit is not sufficiently

exciting. But how easy were it, to make it more so! A thoughtful man will often feel, that instead of cautiously and considerately touching the human heart, he might go into that heart, with swords and knives, to cut, to wound, and almost to slay it, if such were his pleasure. What if he were to describe suffering infancy, or a sick and dying child, or the agony of parental sorrow, or manhood in its strength, or matronage in its beauty, broken down under some infliction, touching the mind or the body, to more than infant weakness; who could bear it? Yes; it is the lot of humanity to suffer. No condition, no guarded palace, no golden shield, can keep out the shafts of calamity. And especially it is the lot of intellectual life to suffer. As man becomes properly man; as his mind grapples with its ordained probation; the dispensation naturally presses harder upon him. The face of careless childhood may be arrayed with perpetual smiles; but behold, how the brow of manhood, and the matronly brow, grows serious and thoughtful, as years steal on; how the cheek grows pale, and what a meaning is set in the depths of many an eye around you; all proclaiming histories, long histories of care and anxiety, and disappointment and affliction!

Now into this overshadowed world, One has come, to commune with suffering; to soothe, to relieve, to conquer it: himself a sufferer, himself acquainted with grief, himself the conqueror of pain; himself made perfect through sufferings; and teaching us to gain like virtue and victory. For in all this, I see him ever calm, patient, cheerful, triumphant.

And what a touching aspect does all this strong and calm endurance lend to his afflictions. For he *was* afflicted, and *his soul was* sometimes "sorrowful, even

unto death." When I read, that at the grave of Lazarus, "Jesus wept;" when I hear him say, in the garden of Gethsemane, "Father, if it be possible, remove this cup from me;" when from the cross arose that piercing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I know that he suffered. I know that loneliness, and desertion, and darkness were upon his path; I feel that sorrow and fear sometimes touched, with a passing shade, that seraphic countenance.

But oh! how divinely does he rise above all! What a peculiarity was there in the character of this wonderful Being; the rejected, the scorned, the scourged, the crucified: and yet no being was ever so considerate towards the faults of his friends, as he was towards the hostility of his very enemies; no being was ever so kindly and compassionate in spirit; so habitually even and cheerful in temper; so generous and gracious in manner. I cannot express the sense I have of his equanimity, of his gentleness, of the untouched beauty and sweetness of his philanthropy, of the unapproached greatness of his magnanimity and fortitude. He looked through this life, with a spiritual eye, and saw the wise and beneficent effect of suffering. He looked up with confiding faith to a Father in heaven; he looked through the long and blessed ages beyond this life; and earth, with all its scenes and sorrows, shrunk to a point, amidst the all-surrounding infinity of truth and goodness, and heaven.

Thus, my brethren, has he taught us how to suffer. He has resolved that dark problem of life; how that suffering, in the long account, may be better than ease; and poverty, better than riches; and desertion, better than patronage; and mortification, better than applause; and disappointment, better than success; and martyrdom, better than all honours of a sinful life;

and how, therefore, that suffering is to be met with a brave and manly heart, with a sustaining faith, with a cheerful courage; counting it all joy, and making it all triumph.

Thus have I attempted and I feel that I ought not to detain you longer; I have attempted, however imperfectly, to unfold the intent for which Jesus suffered; to unfold the import and teaching of the cross of Christ to human guilt, to human virtue, and to human happiness. May you know more of the truth as it is in Jesus, than words can utter, or worldly heart conceive! And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always. Amen.

III.

ON THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM.

THE celebrated *five points* of Calvinism are the following; total depravity, election, particular redemption, irresistible grace, and the final perseverance of saints. It has been justly observed, that "the two first only are fundamental doctrines; the three last necessary consequences." The consequences, however, are none the less liable to their separate and particular objections. But as I propose to confine myself to questions at *issue* between Orthodox and Liberal Christians, I shall not think it necessary to offer anything more than a passing remark or two, on the doctrines of particular redemption, and the saints' perseverance.

Particular redemption, or the limitation of the atonement, both in its design and efficacy, *to the elect*, is a doctrine which has long since been discarded by the Congregationalists of this country. Indeed, these churches are about as improperly called *Calvinistic*, as they are, in common parlance among the mass of our people, denominated Presbyterian. It is worth while to remark, though it be only for the sake of correcting a verbal inaccuracy, that there are not above a dozen or twenty *Presbyterian* churches in all New England; the word Presbyterian properly standing for a form of church government, not for a faith. And it is more important to observe, for the sake of correcting an error in the minds of the people, that there is probably, in strictness of speech, *not one Calvin-*

istic Church in the ancient dominion of the Puritans. Every one of the *five points* has been essentially modified, has been changed from what it originally was.

But to return; the doctrine of particular redemption deserves to be noticed, as an instance of that attempt at *mathematical precision*, which, as I think, is a distinguishing trait of Calvinism, and which has done so much harm to the theological speculations of this country. I shall have occasion to refer to this kind of reasoning again. In the instance before us, it appears in the following statement. Sinners, it was said, had incurred a debt to divine justice; they owed a certain amount of suffering. Jesus Christ undertook, in behalf of the elect, to pay this debt. Now, if he had suffered more, paid more, than was necessary to satisfy this particular demand, there would have been a waste of suffering, a waste of this transferable merit. But there *was* no such waste; the suffering exactly met the demand; and therefore the redemption was *particular;* it was limited to the elect; no others *could* be saved, without *another* atonement. This was, once, *theological reasoning!* And to dispute it, was held to be intolerable presumption. Such presumption severed, for a time, the New England churches from their southern brethren. Such a dispute, with one or two others like it, has rended the Presbyterian Church asunder.

Let us now say a word on the doctrine of *the saints' perseverance.* If you separate from this the idea of an irresistible grace, impelling, and, as it were, compelling Christians to persevere in piety and virtue, there is little, perhaps, to object to it. It *is* so separated in the *present* Orthodox belief, and therefore, it is scarcely a question in *controversy.* We all believe, that a man,

who has become once thoroughly and heartily interested in the true Gospel, doctrine, character and glory of Jesus Christ, is *very* likely to persevere and grow in that interest. I confess, that my own conviction on this point is very strong, and scarcely falls short of any language in which the doctrine of perseverance is declared. I can hardly conceive, how a man, who has once fully opened his eyes upon that "Light," should ever be willing to close them. And I believe, that in proportion as the Gospel is understood and felt, felt in all its deep fountains of peace and consolation, understood in all its revelations and unfoldings of purity and moral beauty; that in proportion to this, the instances of "falling away," whether into infidelity or worldliness, will be more and more rare. I am aware, however, and think it ought to be said, that the common statements of the doctrine of perseverance are dangerous to the unreflecting and to the speculative. The truth is, that we ought to have nothing to do with perseverance as a doctrine, and everything with it, as a fact. Good men shall persevere; good Christians, above all, shall persevere; but let them remember that they can do so, only by constant watchfulness, endeavour, self-denial, prayer, fidelity.

I shall now take up the more important subjects named at the head of this article.

The first is *total depravity*, including, of course, the position that this depravity is *native*.

I shall say nothing, in the few brief hints I have now to offer, of the practical views, which we all ought deeply to consider, of the *actual depravity* of man. I am concerned, at present, then, only with the speculative and abstract doctrine of native, total depravity And I am anxious, in the first place, to state it, in such a manner, as shall be unexceptionable to its most

scrupulous advocate. It is not, then, according to modern explanations, that man is unable to be good, or that he is as bad as he can be; or that his natural appetites, sympathies and instincts are originally bad. I have known the distinction to be put in this way; that man is totally depraved, in the *theological sense* of those words, but not in the common and classical sense of them, as they are used in our English literature, and in ordinary conversation: a very good distinction, but a very bad precedent and principle for all fair reasoning. For if men are allowed to apply to common words this secret, technical, theological meaning, their speculations can neither be understood, nor met, nor subjected to the laws of common sense. It is not safe in moral reasonings, to admit two kinds of depravity, or two kinds of goodness. Men will be too ready to find out, that it is easier to be good, according to one theory of goodness, than according to another. And, it has too often come to pass, that *regenerated* and *sanctified*—the theological words—have not meant, pure, humble, amiable, and virtuous. And so, on the other hand, a man may much more easily and calmly admit that he is depraved, in the theological, than in the common sense. And in making this distinction, he deprives himself of one of the most powerful means of conviction. There is a great deal of truth in that *theory* of moral sentiments, though it does not go to the bottom of the subject, which maintains that a man learns to condemn and reproach himself, *through sympathy* with that feeling of *others*, which condemns and reproaches him. But of this, by his peculiar and secret idea of depravity, the reasoner in question deprives himself. And hence it is, that such a man can talk loudly and extravagantly of his own depravity. It is because he does not use that word in the ordinary sense,

nor feel the reproach that attaches to it. It is hence that congregations can calmly and indifferently listen to those charges of utter depravity, which, if received in their *common* acceptation, would set them on fire with resentment.

But the distinction does not much tend, after all, to help the matter, as a doctrine, though it does tend so nearly to neutralize it as a conviction; because, it is still contended, that the theological sense is the true sense. When the advocate of this doctrine says, that men are utterly depraved, he means that they are so, in the only true, in the highest sense of those words. And when he says, that this depravity is native, he means to fix the charge, not indeed, upon the *whole* nature of man, not upon his original appetites and sympathies, but upon his highest, his *moral* nature. He means to say, that his moral nature—and nothing else, strictly speaking, *can* be sinful or holy—that his *moral* nature produces nothing but sin; that all which *can* sin in man *does* sin, and does nothing *but* sin, so long as it follows that tendency which comes from his nature. He means to say, that sin is as truly and certainly the fruit of his moral nature, as *thought* is the fruit of his *mental* nature. And it makes no difference to say that he sins freely, for it is just as true that he thinks freely. In fact, he is not free to *cease* from doing either. In this view, indeed, depravity comes nothing short of an absolute inability to be holy. For if the moral constitution of man is such, as naturally to produce nothing but sin, I see not how he can any more help sinning, than he can help thinking. I do not forget that it is *said*, that man *has* the moral power to be holy; for I am glad to admit any modification in the statement of the doctrine. But, in fact, what does it amount to? What is a moral power to be good, but a *disposition to be so*? And if no such disposition is

allowed to belong to human nature, I see not in what intelligible sense any *power* can belong to it.*

I will not pursue this definition of human depravity farther into those metaphysical distinctions and subtilties, to which it would lead. But I would now ask the reader, as a matter of argument, whether he can believe, that the simple and practical teachers of our religion ever thought of settling any of these nice and abstruse questions? For it is not enough for Orthodox believers on this point, that we admit the Scripture writers to have represented human depravity as exceedingly great and lamentable; *that* they undoubtedly did; but the Orthodox interpreter insists, that they meant to represent it, with metaphysical exactness, as *native* and *total*. He insists, that they meant *just so much*. That they meant a great deal, I repeat, is unquestionable; that they used phraseology of a strong and unlimited character, is admitted; but to draw from writings, so marked with solemn earnestness and feeling, certain precise and metaphysical truths; to extract dogmas from the bold and heart-burning denunciations of prophets; to lay hold of weapons of controversy in the sorrowful and indignant reproaches of those, who wept over human wickedness, seems to me preposterous. Surely, if any one of us were speaking of some very iniquitous practice, of some abominable traffic, or of some city or country whose wickedness cried to heaven, we should speak strongly, we should exhaust our language of its strongest epi-

*I believe that this is still the prevailing view of human depravity: but I should not omit, perhaps, to notice that, since these essays were written, another modification of the doctrine has been proposed. It is, that sin is not the necessary result of man's moral constitution, but the invariable result of his moral condition. There is little to choose. In either case, sin, and sin only, is inevitably *bound up with human existence*.

thets; it would be perfectly natural to do so: but, *as* surely, the last thing, we should think of, would be that of laying down a doctrine: the last thing we should think of, would be that of philosophizing, and propounding theoretic dogmas upon the nature of the soul! And, to make the case parallel, I may add, that we should by no means think of charging every or any individual, in such a country, or city, or company, with *total* and *native* depravity. I know, there will be some to say, but they will not be the really intelligent and thinking, that *our* language and *Scripture* language are different things. Let them be different in as many respects as any one pleases; but they must not be different in this. *All language is to be interpreted by the same general principles.* He, who does not admit this, has not taken the first step in true theology, and is not to be disputed with on this ground; but must be carried back to consider "what be the first principles" applicable to such inquiries.

As a matter of argument, *out* of the Scriptures, I will ask but one further question, and then leave the subject. I ask the Calvinist to say, from what source he originally derived his *ideas of moral qualities;* whence he obtained his *conceptions* of goodness, holiness, &c.? I am certain, that neither he nor any man has obtained these *conceptions* of moral qualities from anything but the *experience* of them. A man could no more conceive of goodness, without having felt it, at some moment, and to some extent, than he could conceive of sweetness without tasting it. No description, no reasoning, no comparison could inform him either of the one or the other. A man does not approve of what is right, by *any reasoning;* whether upon utility, or the fitness of things, or upon anything else; but by simple consciousness. This is the doc-

trine of our most approved moral philosophers. But, consciousness of what? Of the qualities approved, plainly. A man must *have* a right affection before he can approve it, before he can know anything about it. Does not this settle the question? A *totally* and *natively* depraved being could have no idea of rectitude, or holiness, and by consequence, no idea of the moral character of God. And it has, therefore, been rightly argued, by some who have held the doctrine we are discussing, that men naturally have no such ideas. But I will not suppose that this is a position to be contended against; since it would follow, that men are commanded, on peril and pain of all future woes, to love a holiness and a moral perfection of God, which they are not merely unable to love, but of which, according to the supposition, they have no conception!

The two remaining points to be considered are *election* and *irresistible grace*, or the divine influence on the mind. I take these together, because I have one principle of scriptural interpretation to advance, which is applicable to them both. And as I do not remember to have seen it brought forward, in discussions of this nature, and as it seems to me, an unquestionably just principle, I shall take up some space to explain it.

It must be admitted, that very strong and pointed language is used in the New Testament, concerning election, and God's spirit or influence in the human heart. And I think it is apparent that the Arminian opposers of these doctrines have betrayed a consciousness, that they had considerable difficulties to contend with. They have seemed to be aware that the language of Scripture, which their Calvinistic adversaries quote, is strong, and they have shown some disposition to lessen its force, or to turn it into vague and general applications. Now, for my own part, I find no dif-

ficulty in admitting the whole force and personal bearing of these representations, though I cannot receive them in the form which Calvinism has given them. And I make this exception, too, not because I am opposed to the strength and directness of the Calvinistic belief, but because I am opposed, in this, as in other respects, to the metaphysical and moral principles of the system. In short, I believe in personal election, and the influence of the Almighty Spirit on the mind: and this, or what amounts to this, I suspect all Christians believe. For, an "election of communities," as some interpret it, is still an election of the individuals that compose them. And an "election to privileges," as others prefer to consider it, is still making a distinction, and a distinction on which salvation depends. If it be said that an "election to privileges" saves the doctrine of human freedom; so, I answer, must any election save the doctrine of human freedom, but that of the fatalist. And the same may be said of divine influence.

Let us, then, go to the proposed principle of interpretation, which, I confess, relieves my own mind, and I hope it may other minds.

I say, then, that *the apostles wrote for their subject.* It is a well established principle among the learned, though too little applied, that the apostles wrote for their age; with particular reference, that is, to the circumstances of their own times. I now maintain, in addition to this, *that they wrote for their subject.* Their subject, their exclusive subject, was religion; and the principles of the divine government, which they apply to *this* subject may be equally applicable to everything else. Their *not saying*, that these principles have such an application, does not prove that they have not; because they wrote for their subject,

and it was not their business to say so. In other words, God's government is infinite; and they speak but of one department of it. His foreknowledge and his influence are unbounded; they speak of this foreknowledge and influence, but in one single respect. But instead of limiting the application of their principles to this one department and this one respect, the inference would rather be, that they are to be extended to everything. And in fact this extension of the principle with regard to election—in one instance, and I believe, only one—*is* hinted at, where the apostle says, that Christians are "predestinated according to the purpose of him, *who worketh all things, after the counsel of his own will.*" If this be true, then, *everything* is a matter of divine counsel; *everything* is disposed of by election. And men are as much elected to be philosophers, merchants, or inhabitants of this country or that country, as they are elected to be Christians. If this is election, I believe there will be found no difficulty in it; save what exists in that inscrutableness of the subject, which must forbid our expecting ever to fathom it.

It will be apparent from this view, in what I differ from Calvinists. They make that foreknowledge and purpose of God, which relate to the religious *characters of men*, a peculiarity in the divine government. Connecting the doctrine of election, as they do, with that of special grace, they leave an impression unfavourable to human exertion, and to the divine impartiality. But I maintain, without denying the general difficulties of the subject, that the religious part of the character is no more the result of the divine prescience and purpose, than any other part; and we have no more reason to perplex ourselves with this department of the divine government, than with any other.

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Our principle admits of a fuller illustration on the subject of *divine influence*. I say that the apostles wrote for their subject, and wrote so exclusively for it, that no inference is to be raised, from their *silence*, against applying their principles to other subjects. And I will present an illustration of this argument, to which no one who respects the authority of Scripture, can object. Look, then, at the inspired writers of old. Writing as they did, under a long established form and dispensation of religion, they took a freer and wider range of subjects. And thus they extended the doctrine of divine influence to everything. They applied it much more frequently to outward things, than to the mind; and much more frequently to the common business of life, than to religion. Nay, they asserted the necessity of this influence, in the common affairs of life, as strongly as the New Testament writers do, in the spiritual concerns of religion. They as much, and as strongly asserted, that men *could not succeed*, in business, or in study, in agriculture, in the mechanic arts, or in seeking after knowledge, without God's aid and influence, as our Christian teachers assert, that men cannot grow in grace and piety, without that aid and influence. But, now, observe how different was the situation of the New Testament writers. They had no leisure, if I may speak so, to turn aside to the common affairs of life. They were obliged to put forth every energy for the propagation and defence of a new faith. They had no time, for instance, to prepare general and abstract pieces of devotion, as many of the Psalms are; or books of maxims and apothegms, like the Proverbs; or highly wrought moral dialogues, like the Book of Job. They had no time to descant on matters of speculative morality, the prudence of life, and the diversified ways of Providence.

Religion—religion, as a matter of evidence and experience, was the great engrossing theme. And hence they have spoken of that divine influence and superintendence, which really extend to all things; they have spoken of them, I say, especially and chiefly *in relation to religion.* But it would be as unjustifiable and unsafe, from this circumstance, to limit the doctrine of divine influence to religious matters, as it would be, from consulting the *ancient* records, to limit it to outward nature, and the common affairs of life. The only safe rule, whether in reasoning, or for devotion, is to extend it to all things.

In all this, I am aware that I am asserting nothing that is new. I am only attempting to free the subject from those difficulties, that have arisen from the *peculiarity* of the New Testament communications. I repeat it, that, in the principles, there is nothing new or peculiar. All good Christians have believed, and must believe, that the wise counsel and holy providence of God extend to everything. We must all believe, in some sense, in *election* and *divine influence.* The principal difficulty and danger to most minds, I suspect, have arisen from their attaching too much *peculiarity* to the counsel and influence of the Almighty, in the matters of religion. They have said, "If I am elected, I shall certainly be saved; and if I am not, it is in vain for me to try. And if God's Spirit works within me the work of faith, I have nothing to do myself." Now, let them extend their views of this subject; and they will be safe, and ought to be satisfied. But, at any rate, they will be safe. They will be effectually guarded from the abuse of these doctrines. For as no one will expect to be a physician, or a philosopher, without study, because he hopes or imagines, that he is foreordained, *or will be supernaturally* assisted, to gain

eminence in these professions; so neither will any similar hope of being a Christian, and being saved, lessen the exertions that are suitable to that end. With these views of the doctrines in question, *common sense* may be trusted to guard them from perversion.

I said that the danger was of attaching *too much* peculiarity to that counsel and influence of God, which are connected with our salvation. Nevertheless, *something* of this nature, I apprehend, *is* to be ascribed to them. I distrust single views of subjects. It arises, I believe, from the imperfection and weakness of our minds, that our whole mental vision is apt to be engrossed with seeing a truth in one point of light. Separate views must be combined, to form a just and well-proportioned faith. This, above all things, is liable to be forgotten amidst the biasses of controversy. We may take the larger view of the subjects before us, and yet we may admit that God does especially interpose in behalf of religious beings, weak and tempted as we are. And we may admit, that it has especially pleased him, that it is a counsel most agreeable to his nature, to bring good out of evil, to bring good men out of this world of temptations. I believe both. It does not perplex nor disturb me, but it calms and it comforts me, to believe that the good and merciful Spirit of God is all around me, and can interpose for me and assist me, in my times of trouble, and temptation, and peril. And it does not pain me, but it imparts satisfaction to my mind to believe, that the counsel, which has designed the highest good to its obedient offspring, is an eternal counsel!

If, now, on the whole, it be said that these views, which have been offered, lessen the importance, or the reality of God's counsel and providence, we maintain on the contrary, that they assert them in the highest

degree; that they carry them into all things, and thus directly lead to devotion; that they serve, therefore, the grandest purpose of religious instruction, by bringing God, in his power and his mercy, near to us; by impressing a sense of our dependance on him, and our unspeakable obligations to him, at every moment, and every step, for every attainment and blessing of life. This is the religious frame of spirit that we most need to gain; to feel, that God is near to us, that he upholds and blesses us; that he is near to us always; that all things are filled with his presence; that the universe around us is not so much a standing monument, as a living expression of his goodness; that all which we enjoy is not so much benevolence, sending down its gifts from afar to us, as it is the energy of his love working within us.

This, then, is the practical result of our reflections; that God is all in all; that his ever-living mercy and his ever-working power pervade all things; that they are in all height and in all depth, in what is vast and what is minute, in the floating atom and the rolling world, in the fall of a sparrow to the ground and in the great system of the universe, in the insect's life, and in the soaring spirit of the archangel.

It is in Him, that each of us lives, and moves, and has his being. If we have gained any blessings of life, and if we have made any acquisition of knowledge, it is from him. And especially, if we have made any attainments in piety; if we are learning the great lesson of life, and that which prepares us for another and a better; if we are learning to be devout and pure in heart, to be affectionate, and forbearing, and patient, and penitent, and forgiving; if the dew of a heavenly influence is descending upon us, and the fruits of virtue and goodness are springing up within us; if the uni-

verse is ministering to our devotion, if religion, with every kind and gracious power, has visited us, and has become our friend, and guide, and comforter, the employment, and happiness, and end of our being; Oh! this is an emanation from the Divinity, a beam of heaven's own light, an expression of God's mercy, that demands our highest and tenderest gratitude. Thus, if we would come to the great practical result of all religious truth, let us be convinced, and feel, that "God is all in all." "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; and to him, to him who made us, and blesses us, and guides us to heaven, to HIM be glory for ever and ever."

IV.

ON FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

I HAVE hesitated about introducing this subject, in the present course of observations, because there is no question upon it that does, accurately speaking, divide Orthodox and Liberal Christians. The great question, about the duration of future punishment, has been brought very little into debate between the parties, and it has no particular connexion with any of the speculative questions that *are* in debate. If Universalism, considered as a denial of all future punishment, has more affinity with any one theological system than another, it undoubtedly is Calvinism; and it is a well known fact, that it originally sprung from Calvinism, and existed in the closest connexion with it.

Still, however, since it is latterly urged, by the Orthodox, that there is a great difference between them and their opponents, on this subject, and since, as I apprehend, a difference does exist in their general views and speculations, and one that deserves to be discussed, I have thought proper to bring it into the course of my remarks.

As the subject has been very little discussed among us, I shall treat it, not so much in the form of controversy, as with that calm and dispassionate disquisition, which more properly belongs to a theme so solemn and weighty.

I. The retribution of guilt is serious in the contemplation, and must be severe in the endurance. *The penal suffering of a guilty mind, wherever, and whenever it comes, must be great.* This, to me, is the first and clearest of all truths, with regard to the punishment of sin. Even experience teaches us this; and Scripture, with many words of awful warning, confirms the darkest admonitions of experience. If sin is not repented of, in this life, then its punishment must take place in a future world.

Of the miseries of that future state, I do not need the idea of a direct infliction from God, to give me a fearful impression. Of all the unveiled horrors of that world, nothing seems so terrific, as the self-inflicted torture of a guilty conscience. It will be enough to fill the measure of his woe, that the sinner shall be left to himself; that he shall be left to the natural consequences of his wickedness. In the universe, there are no agents to work out the misery of the soul, like its own fell passions; not the fire, the darkness, the flood, or the tempest. Nothing, within the range of our conceptions, can equal the dread silence of conscience, the calm desperation of remorse, the corroding of ungratified desire, the gnawing worm of envy, the bitter cup of disappointment, the blighting curse of hatred. These, pushed to their extremity, may be enough to destroy the soul; as lesser sufferings, in this world, are sometimes found to destroy the reason.

But whatever that future calamity will be, I believe it is the highest idea we can form of it, to suppose that it is of the sinner's own procuring; that the burden of his transgressions will fall upon him, by its own weight; not be hurled upon him, as a thunder-bolt from heaven. If we should suppose a wicked man to live always on earth, and to proceed in his career of iniquity adding

sin to sin, arming conscience with new terrors, gathering and enhancing all horrible diseases and distempers, and increasing and accumulating the load of infamy and woe; this might give us some faint idea of the extent to which sin may go in another world.

This, then, is not a subject to be treated lightly, nor with any heat or passion; but should be taken home to the most solemn contemplation and deep solicitude of every accountable being.

II. My second remark is, that the scriptural representations of future punishment *are not literal nor definite.*

That they are not literal is manifest from the consideration, that they are totally inconsistent, if taken literally. If there is a lake of fire, there cannot be a gnawing worm. If it is blackness of darkness. it cannot be a flaming deluge of fire. If it is death and destruction, literally, it cannot be sensible pain. If it is the loss of the soul, it cannot be the suffering of the soul. And yet all these representations are used to describe the future misery. It is plain, therefore, that all cannot be literally true. To suppose them literal, indeed, would be to make the future world like the present; for they are all drawn from present objects. Neither are these representations definite. It is not a definite idea, but "a certain fearful looking-for of judgment," that is given to us, in the present state. We know nothing about the particular place, or the particular circumstances of a future punishment. If these things are not literally described, it follows, indeed, that they are not definitely. For, the moment these descriptions cease to be literal, they cease to furnish ideas of anything that is tangible, of anything that can belong to place or circumstance, of anything that has dimensions, shape, or elements. That is to say, they

are figurative. They serve but to throw a deeper shadow over the dark abyss; and leave us, not to pry into it with curiosity, but to tremble with fear. Indeed, the very circumstance, that the *future woe is unknown*, is, in itself, a most awful and appalling circumstance. It may be, that the revelation of it comes to us in general and ambiguous terms, for this very purpose. There is really something more alarming in a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, than in the definite knowledge of it.

Neither, as I believe, are those terms, which describe the *duration* of future misery, definite. Indeed, why should they be more definite, than those which relate to place or circumstance? In passages where all else is figurative, and that in so very high a degree, why may it not be suspected that what relates to the time may be figurative? This suspicion, drawn from the connected phraseology, may derive additional strength from the subject, about which the language in question is employed. It is the future, the indefinite, the unknown state. Whatever stretches into the vast futurity, is to us eternal. We can grasp no thought of everlasting, but that it is indefinite. You may bring this argument home to your own feelings, if you suppose that you had been called to describe some future and awful calamity, which was vast, indefinite, unknown, terrible; if you consider whether you would not, with *these* views, have adopted phraseology as strong, as unlimited, as you find in the Scriptures on this subject. If, then, our idea of future punishment extends so far as to provide for the full strength of the language used; if our theory provide for the terms to be explained by it, is it not sufficient? does it not go far enough?

To these considerations, relating to the language

and the principles of interpretation that ought to be applied to it, let it be observed in addition, that the oriental style was habitually and very highly metaphorical, and is to be explained by the impression it would naturally make on those who were accustomed to it; and that even among us, with our cooler imaginations, the terms in question, such as "for ever," &c., are used figuratively, are applied to limited periods, and this on the most common occasions and subjects. To take one instance for all, as being the strongest of all: there is no higher or more unqualified description of the endurance of future misery, than that which says, "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Now it has been very plausibly argued thus; that "if ever the time comes when their worm shall die; if ever there shall be a quenching of the fire at all; then it is not true, that their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."* And the argument might be as conclusive as it is plausible, were it not for a single passage in the Old Testament, which applies the same language to a punishment confessedly temporary. It is the closing passage of Isaiah; "and they shall go forth," that is, from Jerusalem, and probably to the valley of Jehoshaphat, where it is well known, that carcasses were thrown, and an almost perpetual fire kept to consume them; "And they shall go forth, and shall look upon the carcasses of the men who have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh."

I shall only remark farther, upon the Scripture representations, that there is an ambiguity, a generality, a vastness, a terror about them, that seems fitted to check our confident reasonings. It is enough for us to fear.

* Jonathan Edwards.

To speculate much, seems not our wisdom. Yet if we will speculate; if we can dispute on such a subject; if we can wrangle about texts and interpretations, and claim the full amount and force of every passage and statement, it may be well for us to be reminded, that we shall only confound ourselves, in our haste, and destroy the positions we take, in our eagerness to defend them. For if any one shall insist on the full force of those declarations, that denounce everlasting misery; his adversary may as fairly take his stand on the opposite texts, which declare that God *will have all men to be saved;* that Jesus came to destroy death; that death is swallowed up of life. Or if any one shall confine himself to the words eternal, unquenchable, &c., and will allow them no modification, I see not how he can fairly deny to his adversary the equal right of adhering to the representations of death, destruction, loss of the soul, or in other words, of annihilation, which are applied to the same subject. Nay, the latter will seem to have the advantage in the argument, for annihilation is an *everlasting* calamity. But not to dwell on this; the ambiguity mentioned, furnishes an answer to an important objection to our views. It is said, if future misery is not literally eternal, what reason is there to think that future happiness is so? for the same terms are brought to describe both. I answer that neither of them depend on general terms; that we are to look for our belief on all these subjects to the scope and tenor of the sacred writing; and that, in particular, the promises of future happiness are all consistent, and leave no obscurity nor doubt. It is life, peace, rest; knowledge, perfection; glory, blessedness. But the threatenings of future evil are ambiguous, dark, obscure, and if taken literally, inconsistent. It is life, and death; being tormented, and being destroyed. It

leaves therefore a vague but fearful impression. And such, it seems to me, were the Scriptures intended to leave; the impression of some vast and tremendous calamity, without precisely informing us what it is.

I cannot close this topic without offering one or two observations, independent of the Scripture arguments, which seem to me of great weight.

There is one tremendous bearing of the doctrine of literally eternal punishment, the bare statement of which seems to me almost enough to decide the question. Take the instance of a child; one who hast just begun to be a moral agent; let the age be what it may; we need not now decide: suppose that it has just come to the capacity of being sinful or holy; that it has possessed this capacity one hour or one day; that during this brief period it has been selfish, passionate, unholy —a case not uncommon, I fear; that in short it has possessed, during this brief period of its probation, a character, which the gospel does not approve, which it condemns, which it threatens: and can you believe that this child, in ignorance, in imbecility, in temptations; with passions unconsciously nurtured in the sleep of infancy, which are now breaking forth; with scarcely any force of reason to restrain them; with but a slight knowledge of God, with not a thought of futurity; that this child, the creature of weakness and ignorance, is actually, and in one single day, setting the seal to a misery that is eternal, and eternally increasing; to a misery which must therefore, in the event, infinitely surpass all that the world, in all the periods of its duration, has suffered or will suffer? Yet this is the doctrine; this is one essential form of the doctrine of literally eternal punishment; and if you cannot believe this, as I am persuaded, if you feel the

case you cannot, you cannot believe the doctrine at all in any form.

There is another observation which seems to me equally conclusive. The doctrine, as it appears to me, destroys the natural proofs of the goodness of God. Let it be observed, that every question about this subject may be resolved into this: Is human life a blessing? If not, to what purpose is all that can be said about the order, beauty, richness and kindly adaptations of this earthly system? What is it to me, that the heavens are glorious to behold, that the earth is fair to look upon; what to me that I dwell in a splendid mansion; if on the whole I have more reason to be sorrowful than to be happy; if I have more to fear than to hope; if life is more to be lamented than desired; if it is a subject more of regret than gratitude? Is human life, then, a blessing? To deny it, is impiety. To deny it, is to take away all grounds of religious trust and devotion, all grounds of believing in the Sacred Scriptures, and in Jesus. For if God is not good, we can have no confidence in his rectitude or veracity. If God is not good, we cannot know but he may deceive us, with even miraculous proofs of falsehood. Our life, then, is a blessing: that is, it is a thing to be desired. Now the question is, whether, when it is so difficult to form the character, which is required for future happiness; when it is so possible to fail; when the unerring Scriptures are so full of awful warnings; whether any rational being would desire existence, on the terrible condition, that if he did once fail, he would fail forever; that if he did fail in this short life, he must sink to a helpless, remediless, everlasting woe. The word eternity passes easily from our lips, but consider what it imports; consider it deeply, and then say: who would think it a favour to take so tremendous a risk? Could

any one of us have been brought into being, for one moment, in the maturity of his faculties, to decide on such a proposal, to decide whether he should take such a hazard, surely, he would make the refusal, with a strength of emotion, with a horror of feeling, that would be enough to destroy as it passed over him. "No! no!" he would exclaim, "save me from that trial: let me be the nothing that I was: there at least is safety: save me from the paths of life, that conduct such multitudes—and why not me?—down to everlasting and ever-living death!" Now, let us ask, can it be that the all-powerful and infinitely benevolent God has brought beings into existence in circumstances that deserve to be thus regarded; that he has given them life so fated, so perilous, that if they could comprehend it, if it were not for their ignorance—they would abhor the gift as an infinite curse?

There are various degrees and shades of religious belief, and much that is called such is so low upon the scale, as scarcely to differ from downright skepticism. And I have often been ready to ask, when I have surveyed the aspects of life around me, whether men do *really believe* on this subject, what is written in their creed. There are those, I know, who have found a great difference between *asserting* and *believing* in this case; who, when they came to be impressed with this doctrine, felt as if all the cheerfulness of life was the most horrible insensibility; and as if all the light that was around them, the light that rested on the fair scenes of nature, was turned into darkness and gloom; felt as if all that is bright and gladdening, in the general aspects of society and of the world, was the most treacherous and terrible illusion! And is it not so, if the popular doctrine be true? I see a busy, toiling, and oftentimes joyous multitude, thronging the

villages and cities of the world; hundreds of millions of human beings, to whom happiness is more than life, and misery more than death. I see childhood, lovely childhood, with its opening moral faculties, in ten thousand bosoms, throbbing with new and glad existence. I see the whole world, dwelling in an ignorance, or a moral unconsciousness, almost like that of childhood; and *are* they, all around me, every hour, by hundreds and by thousands, dropping into a region of woes and agonies and groans, never to be relieved or terminated? Gracious heaven! if one tenth part of the human race were the next year to die amidst the horrors of famine, that evil, light as it is in the comparison, would cover the earth with a universal mourning!

How evident is it, then, that men have nothing *approaching* to a belief, of what the popular creed avers on this awful subject. I do not bring this as an *argument* against the doctrine it lays down. But I do maintain, that men should *believe* what they say, before they condemn those who cannot say so much; that they should feel the trial of faith, before they decide on the propriety of a doubt.

I may be told that what I have been saying is not Scripture, but reasoning. I know it is reasoning. I have already shown, as I think, that the Scriptures do not warrant the doctrine that is commonly deduced from them; and to my mind, the reasoning I have used strongly enforces the rejection of it.

III. But I hasten to my final remark; which is, that the Scriptures reveal our future danger, whatever it be, for the purpose of alarming us; and therefore, that to speculate on this subject, in order to lessen our fear of sinning, involves the greatest hazard and impiety. There is a high moral use, and it is the only use for which the awful revelation of "the powers of the worl

to come" was intended, and most evidently and eminently fitted; and that is, to awaken fear. Whatever else the language in question means, it means this. About other topics relating to it, there may be questions; about this, none at all. And after all that has been said, I shall not hesitate to add, that we are in no danger of really believing too much, or fearing too much. And this is my answer, if any should object to the moral tendency of the views that have been offered: I maintain that a man *should fear all that he can*, and I actually hold a belief, that affords the fullest scope for such a feeling. It is not of so much consequence that any one should use fearful words on this subject, and even violently contend for them, as that he should himself fear and tremble.

And I repeat, that there is reason. For if we adopt any opinion, short of the most blank and bald Universalism, it cannot fail to be serious. Will you embrace the idea of a literal destruction? Imagine, then, if possible, what it is to be no more for ever! Look down into the abyss of dark and dismal annihilation. Think with yourself, what it would be, if all which you call yourself, your mind, your life, your cherished being, were to fall into the jaws of everlasting death! There is something dreadful beyond utterance in the thought of annihilation; to go away from the abodes of life, to quit our hold of life and being itself; to be nothing—nothing, forever! while the glad universe should go onward in its brightness and its glory, and myriads of beings should live and be happy; and all their dwellings, and all their worlds should be overspread with life and beauty and joy! Imagine it, if you can. Think, that the hour of last farewell to all this had come: think of the last moment, of the last act, of the last thought; and that thought annihilation! Oh!

it would be enough to start with its energy your whole being into a new life; methinks, you would spring with agony from the verge of the horrible abyss, and cry for life, for existence—though it were woe and torment! Shall we then prefer the hope of long and remedial suffering? Then carry forward your thoughts to that dark world, where there shall be "no more sacrifice for sin," no more Saviour to call and win us, no more mild and gentle methods of restoration; where sin must be purged from us, if at all, "so as by fire." Carry forward your thoughts to that dark struggle with the powers of retribution, where every malignant and hateful passion will wage the fearful war against the soul; where habit, too, will have bound and shackled the soul with its everlasting chains of darkness; and its companions, fiends like itself, shall only urge it on to sin. When will the struggle cease? If sin cannot be resisted now, in this world of means, and motives, and mercies, how shall it be resisted *then*? When or how shall the miserable soul retrieve its steps? From what depth of eternity shall it trace back its way of ages? God only knows. To us it is not given. But we know that the retribution of a sinful soul is what we ought above all things to fear. For thus are we instructed. "Fear not them that, after they have killed the body, have no more that they can do: but fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." We know not what it is; but we know that such terms and phrases as we read; "the wrath to come; the worm that dieth not; the fire that is not quenched; the blackness of darkness; the fiery indignation:" that these words not only import what is fearful, but were *intended* to inspire a salutary dread. We know not what it is; but we have heard of one who lifted

up his eyes being in torment, and saw the regions of the blessed afar off, and cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me! for I am tormented in this flame." We know not what it is; but we know that the finger of inspiration has pointed awfully to that world of calamity. We know that inspired prophets and apostles, when the interposing veil has been, for a moment, drawn before them, have shuddered with horror at the spectacle. We know that the Almighty himself has gathered and accumulated all the images of earthly distress and ruin, not to show us what it is, but to warn us of what it may be; that he has spread over this world the deep shadows of his displeasure, leaving nothing to be seen, and everything to be dreaded! And thus has he taught us, what I would lay down, as the moral of these observations, and of all my reflections on this subject, that *it is not our wisdom to speculate, but to fear!*

V.

CONCLUSION. THE MODES OF ATTACK UPON LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY, THE SAME THAT WERE USED AGAINST THE DOCTRINE OF THE APOSTLES, AND REFORMERS.

In being assailed as it is, Liberal Christianity meets but with the fate that naturally attends, and actually has attended all improvement. Whether our Theology be a real progress of truth or not, this general statement will not be questioned. Every great advancement in science, in the arts, in politics, has had to encounter this hostility. No cause has been, or is, more bitterly opposed, than the cause of political liberty. So it has been with religion. Christianity had to struggle long with the hostility of the world. Its doctrines were opposed and its friends reproached. And when it declined from its purity, when it was corrupted through its popularity, through its prevalence, through its very orthodoxy, I may say; when a revival of its true doctrines was needed; the men who stood forward in that work, the *Reformers*, found that innovation was still an offence, that dissent was heresy, that truth was accounted no better than ruinous and fatal error.

I say these things, in the general, and at the outset, not to prove, nor would I anywhere pretend to prove by such an argument, that our Theology is right, but to show that opposition to it is no evidence of its being wrong; to show that a doctrine may be, like primitive

Christianity, "everywhere spoken against," and yet be a true doctrine. For there are many, who feel from the bare circumstance, that a system is so much reproached, as if it must be wrong or questionable; and there are many more, who suffer their opinions to float on the current of popular displeasure, without inquiring at all into their justice or validity. Let such remember that no new truths ever did, nor, till men are much changed, ever can enter into the world, without this odium and hostility; and let them not account that, which may be the very seal of truth, to be the brand of error!

I will now proceed to notice some of the particular modes of attack to which Liberal Christianity is subject, to meet these assaults and objections, and to show that in being subjected to these assaults, it suffers no new or singular fate.

I. In the first place, then, it is common to charge upon new opinions all the accidents attending their progress; to blend with their main cause all the circumstances that happen to be connected with it. This is perhaps not unnatural, though it be unjust. Men hear that a new system is introduced, that a new sect is rising. They know nothing thoroughly about it, but they are inquiring what it is. In this state of mind they meet, not with a Unitarian book, but more likely with a passage from a book, taken from its connexion, culled out, it is probable, on purpose to make a bad impression, and forthwith this passage is made to stand for the system. Whenever Unitarianism is mentioned, the obnoxious paragraph rises to mind, and settles all questions about it, at once. Or, perhaps, some act or behaviour of some individual in this new class of religionists is mentioned; and this is henceforth considered and quoted as a just representation, not only

of the whole body, but of their principles also. Thus an impediment in Paul's speech was made an objection to Christianity; an objection which he thought it necessary gravely to debate with the church in Corinth.

I have introduced this sort of objection first, not only because it arises naturally out of a man's first acquaintance with Unitarianism, but because it gives me an opportunity to say, before I proceed any further, *how* much of what passes under this name, it is necessary, as I conceive, to defend. I say, then, it is not necessary to defend everything that passes under this name, everything that every or any Unitarian has written, or said, or done. So obvious a disclamation might seem to be scarcely needful; but it will not seem so to any, who have observed the manner in which things of this sort are charged upon us. What is it to me that such and such persons have said, or written, this or that thing? What is it to the main cause of truth, which we profess to support, or to the great questions at issue? In the circumstances of the Unitarian body, in the novelty to a certain extent of their opinions, in the violent opposition they meet with, I see exposures to many faults; to excesses and extravagances, to mistakes and errors. I could strike off half of the opinions and suggestions, that have sprung up from this progress of inquiry, and still retain a body of unspeakably precious truth. There are several things, and some things of considerable practical moment, which I seriously doubt, whether we, as a denomination, have yet come to view rightly. The violence of opposition has, undoubtedly, in some respects, carried us to an extreme, in some points of opinion and practice. And certainly I find things in our writings, which, in my judgment, are indefensible. What less *can* be said, if we retain any independence, or sobriety, or discrimination about

us? What less can be said of any fallible body of men, of any body, comprising, as all denominations do, all sorts of men, all sorts of writers and thinkers? If they are not inspired, they must be sometimes wrong.

Nay, to bring this nearer home, it were folly for any one of us to contend that everything *he* has said or written is right, or even that it is done with a *right spirit*. Here is a conflict of opinions, the eagerness of dispute, the perverting influence of controversy. Here is an effervescence of the general mind. The moral elements of the world are shaken together, if not more violently, yet more intimately perhaps, than they ever were before. If any man can, with a severe calmness and a solemn scrutiny, sit down and meditate upon those things which agitate so many minds; if he can separate the true from the false, and say a few things, out of many, that are exactly right, and a few things more that are helping on to a right issue; it is, perhaps, all that he ought to expect. How much dross there may be, in the pure gold of the best minds, "He that sitteth as a Refiner" only can know.

This, I confess, is my view of our controversies, and of all human controversies. I have no respect in this matter for authorities, for infallible sentences, or for the reverence and weight that are given to sentences, because they are uttered by some leader in the church, or because they are written in a book. I have no respect for the *spirit* of *quotation*, that, having brought forward a grave proposition from some synod, or council, or book, or body of divinity, holds *that* to be enough. All men err; all synods, and councils, and consistories, and books and bodies of divinity; which is only saying, that they all do that in the aggregate and in form, which they do individually and necessarily. And if this be true, if these views be just, how unrea-

sonable is it, to catch up sentences here and there, from any class of writings, and erect them into serious and comprehensive charges?

The real and proper question is about principles. Let these be shown to be wrong, and the denomination that abides by them must fall. On this, the only tenable ground for any reasonable man, I take my stand. I have no doubt that our leading principles are true; and it would not, in the slightest degree, disturb this faith, if there could be shown me ten volumes of indefensible extracts from our writings. Whether half a volume of such, out of the hundred that have been written, can be produced, I leave not to the candour of our opponents to decide, but to their ingenuity to make out, if they are able. The constant repetition of three or four stale extracts, garbled from the writings of Priestley and Belsham, would seem to show that the stock of invidious quotations is very small. In fact, I do consider Unitarians, in comparison with any other religious body, as having written with great general propriety, soberness and wisdom. But if they have not, or if any one thinks they have not, it will very little affect the general truth of their principles.

And how ill, let me ask, could any other body of Christians bear this sort of scrutiny? How easy would it be to select from Orthodox writings, and even from those of great general reputation, a mass of extracts that would make the whole world cry out; one part with horror at their enormity, and another with indignation at their being presented for the purpose of showing what orthodoxy is! It would be unjust, I confess. It would disturb no independent believer in that system: and as little ought such things to disturb us.

I have now noticed the first feeling of objection which naturally arises against a new system; that which

proceeds from confounding the main cause with the circumstances that attend it.

II. But another objection, and that perhaps which is first put in form, is against the alleged newness of the system. It is said that this religion is a new thing; that it is a departure from the faith of ages; that it unsettles the most established notions of things, and breaks in upon the order and peace of the churches. I state this objection strongly for the sake of our opponents, and indeed much more strongly than it deserves to be. For Unitarianism professes, so far from being a new thing, to be the old, pure, primitive Christianity. It does not profess, even in comparison with orthodoxy, to be essentially a new thing, but only so, in certain speculative doctrines; and still less is it the friend or promoter of disorder and disunion. Nevertheless, it is, to a certain extent, a new thing, and it occasions, through the objections made to it, much disturbance.

And can these, I ask, be valid or weighty objections in the mouths of Christians and Protestants? Christianity was once a new thing. The Athenian philosophers said to Paul, no doubt with as much contempt as any modern questioner could feel, "We would know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is." And others said, "These men that have turned the world upside down, have come hither also." Yes, troublesome, "pestilent fellows," "movers of sedition," devisers of mischief, and "doers of evil," were the first propagators of Christianity accounted, and were not ashamed thus to suffer in imitation of their slandered Master. And the *Reformers* of Christianity, in the sixteenth century, trod in the same steps, and in like manner had their "names cast out as evil." And especially was it objected to them, that they departed from the faith of ages, and invaded the repose of time-hal-

lowed doctrines and institutions. And in the strong confidence, ay, *the strong argument of the majority*, the same things were said about the truth as are now said; the same cry of "the church is in danger" was raised; the same anathemas were pronounced against dangerous heresies and the denying of the faith. The whole scene was acted over, that is now witnessed, of an exclusive and hostile orthodoxy, on the one hand, and a firm and unyielding dissent on the other; only that orthodoxy could then command the inquisition and the rack; and now it only sets its tribunal on the reputation of men, and subjects the mind to trials, that in some instances scarcely fall short of the tortures of the rack. This has always been the fate of innovation, and, perhaps, it always must be. And to those who, for conscience' sake, draw upon themselves this hostility to whatever is new, I would say; think it not strange concerning this fiery trial, as though any strange thing happened to you. It is the same that has happened to the reformers of faith, to the witnesses for truth, in all ages. Be not astonished or disheartened at this. Only bear it patiently. No assault, no detraction can injure you, if you bear them with the spirit of Christ. Rather will they benefit you unspeakably and forever, benefit you in awakening that love, and meekness, and humility, the trying of which is more precious than that of gold which perisheth. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, if ye be reproached for labouring to rescue his name and his religion from mistake and injury, "happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth on you!"

III. Another method of attack upon Liberal Christianity is to awaken sentiments of pity and horror against it. I am not about to deny that this is very honestly *done; but I* do say that it is an unworthy mode of

assault; that it appeals not to the judgment, but to the passions; and that it is very apt to be the strongest, in the weakest hands. To put on a solemn countenance, to speak in sepulchral tones of awe and lamentation, to *warn* men against this doctrine, is easy. But, alas! for the weakness of men, if it is an instrument easily wielded, it is also an instrument of terrible power with the superstitious, the timid and unreflecting. A considerate man, a man who respects the minds and consciences of those he has to deal with, will be cautious how he takes hold of such a weapon as this: a weapon which prevails chiefly with human weakness, which strikes the very part of our nature that most needs to be supported, which wounds only the infirm, and overwhelms only the prostrate. For I need not say, that it is precisely with minds in this situation that tones of pity and horror have the greatest influence. A man of independent thought and vigorous understanding, who could better afford to bear this sort of influence, is the very person who will not yield to it. He will say indignantly, "that is nothing to the purpose. That does not satisfy me. I did not ask you to warn me, but to enlighten me. I did not ask you to weep, but to reason. No doubt you feel as you say, and very sincerely feel thus; it is not your sincerity that I question, but your argument. You degrade my understanding, when you attempt to work upon it in this manner. I was made to think. The Lord of conscience has given me liberty to inquire; and I will not be subject to any other influence. God has called me to liberty; and man shall not lay me under bondage."

Nor is this all. Pity and horror prove nothing, indeed; but it is moreover a matter of history, that TRUTH has always made its progress amidst the *pity* and *horror* of men. Yes; it has come thus; amidst

sighings and doubtings, and shakings of the head, and warnings of danger, and forebodings of evil. Yes; it has held its way, through tokens like these; with dark countenances about it, and loud denunciations, and woful anathemas. It has stood up and spoken in the person of its great Teacher; and men have "gnashed their teeth and rent their garments," at its voice. It has gone forth into the world, with its devoted Apostles, and been accounted "the offscouring of all things." It has "prophesied in sackcloth," with its faithful witnesses, and borne the cross of ignominy and reproach. The angry Sanhedrim, the bloody Inquisition, the dungeon, the rack, the martyr's stake, have testified to the *abhorrence of men against the truth!*

I do not say that the truth I hold is worthy of this glorious fellowship. But I say that its being joined in any measure to this fellowship, does not prove it false. And if it be true, as I solemnly believe it is, then let not its advocates claim entire exemption from the trials of their elder brethren. It will go on, and men will speak evil of it, and they will struggle against it, and they will lament and weep; but it will be as if they lifted up their voice to withstand the rolling seasons, or struggled against the chariot wheels of the morning, or poured out vain tears upon the mighty stream that is to bear all before it. I say this, more in sorrow, I hope, than in scorn. I am sorry for those who cannot see this matter as I think they ought to see it. I am sorry for the unhappiness, for the honest grief, which a misplaced pity, and an uncharitable zeal, and a spirit of reproach and condemnation, give them. But their grief, save for its own sake, moves me not at all. I consider it as a penance for their mistaken hostility to truth, rather than a fair admonition of error. I believe, and can believe no less, that this unhappiness is

simply the *fruit* of error. Uncharitableness *must* be unhappy; anger *must* be painful; exclusion, and anathematizing, and dooming sincere brethren to perdition, *must* be works of bitterness and grief. I wonder not, that a man should weep while he is doing them; my only wonder is, that he can ever do them, and not weep!

IV. But I shall now proceed to consider one or two objections of a graver character. It is said, that the religion, which Unitarianism teaches, does not meet the wants of human nature, that it does not satisfy the mind, that it fails as a support and comfort to the soul. I recur again to the observation, that it is perfectly natural that this objection should be brought against new views of religion; simply because they are new, and whether they are true or not; and therefore, that no strange thing happens to them, when they are thus regarded. If you take away some parts of a religion on which men have relied, you take away some part of their reliance; and they cannot feel for a time, as if anything else would be such a support and satisfaction to them. This will be especially true, if you introduce simpler, and more rational ideas of religion. The Jew could say to the Christian, "How many feasts and holy-days, and sabbaths and new moons, and rites and ordinances, on which my soul relied, have you removed from me!" The Catholic could say of the Protestant, "Where, alas! are the masses and the confessionals, and the comfortable absolutions, and the intercessions of saints, *for him!*" And things of the same import, concerning the more *doctrinal* aspects of religion, may the Calvinist say to the Unitarian. But the Christian and the Protestant could reply to their respective opponents, "We have a reliance as sure and satisfactory as yours; and more

sound and spiritual, as we judge." And so may the Unitarian say to the Calvinist.

But let us go into the real merits of the case. What *is* a foundation and a support in religion, and whence does true comfort arise? Our Saviour speaks of a foundation, when he says, "he that heareth my words and *doeth them*, I will liken to a wise man," whose "house fell not, because it was *founded* on a rock." Surely, Unitarians do not reject *this* foundation. "But our own endeavours and virtues are not sufficient of themselves." Certainly not; and Unitarians may rely, as unfeignedly as their brethren, on the mercy of God, and they sincerely profess to do so. This satisfies them. To say, that it does not satisfy the demands of a different theology, is only saying that the speculations of the two classes differ. "But," it may be contended, "it does not satisfy *the wants of human nature.*" This is a matter of which every one must judge from the feelings of his own mind. As the Unitarian experiences human nature, he would say that the simple promise of God's mercy and aid to his humble endeavours, does give all needful satisfaction. A certain theory of the divine government may not be satisfied; the superstitious wants of human nature may not be satisfied; but the Unitarian believes that its real wants are.

But I go farther; though I would say what I am about to say, with all reasonable and fair qualifications. I feel obliged to use increasing caution in all general representations. There are men too intelligent and good in every class of Christians, to be very much affected by a formal creed. Nevertheless, I have not a doubt, that there are many to whom the popular religion furnishes grounds of support and satisfaction, which are not right and rational grounds.

The regular plan and process of religious experience, the defined steps and dates; an exact time and moment of conversion, and the certainty of salvation after that; the efficacy of the act of faith, distinguished as it often is from the general efficacy of a holy life; "the view of Christ," and of the atonement as relieving the sinner from his burden; "the rolling off of the burden of sin," as it is often called; the notions of a foundation, and a hope, and a joy, disconnected as they are from the result of long-tried virtue and piety; the idea of the Holy Spirit is alone doing the "effectual work" of salvation in man, doing it by a special interposition after all the sinner's efforts are over, and he is brought to despair of himself; these views, as I believe, furnish a fallacious support, and comfort, and relief, to many. I *would* lay a weight upon man's responsibility, which is, no doubt, disagreeable to him. I would tell a sinful man, that anxiety is more becoming to him than confidence and repose. He is indeed to confide and repose in the mercy of God and the interposition of Christ; but these no more avail him, than to tell him that there is wealth in store for his industry. So far as his own part is concerned, it is industry, it is working, continual working, daily accumulation, that is to make him rich towards God. I would tell him that *believing* is virtually the same as doing; and that it is this doing, this constant doing, and this alone, that can roll away the burden of sin. In short, I would say that for a sinful man to attain to the favour of God and to heaven, is the same as for an intemperate man to attain to sobriety and virtue; that it is what he must do, every day and hour, day by day and hour by hour, striving, watching, guarding, praying, keeping himself under perpetual restraint, till he is redeemed from his iniquity. In other words, I would strive to represent

this matter rationally; and would say, that the sinner is to become a holy man, just as the ignorant is to become a learned man, by little and little, by constant accumulations, by gaining one truth to-day and another to-morrow, by perpetual progress.

Now I do not deny that these things, in the general, are taught by Calvinists; but then I maintain that they are commonly taught in such a way, that they are so mixed up with certain doctrines, as that their pressure upon the soul is relieved: so that a man does not feel that he is to become a Christian just as he is to become a rich man, or a skilful, or a wise man. He does not feel this pressure of necessity upon him, every morning, and lie down with this anxiety every night, as the seeker of learning or wealth does. Alas! few feel this as they ought to feel it! But this is what we should strive to make men feel. And we ought to sweep away all doctrines that stand in the way of this. We should allow of no peace; we should hear of no summary method, no parcelling out of the matters of religious experience, that will make it a different thing from the daily, plain, practical, unwearied *doing* of every thing a man ought to do. No believing of creeds, no paying of contributions, no regular and stated prayers, no oft-repeated confessions, proper as these are in their place; no atonement, nor election, nor special grace, nor perseverance, true as they are when truly explained, should save a man from the pressure of this instant necessity.

I conceive that the reason why Calvinism offers more support to many minds is, that it is a more artificial system, and approaches less nearly to the simple truth. It is too much a religion of seasons and times, of fixtures and props, of reliefs and substitutions, of comforts and confidences. And I am persuaded that

the Roman Catholic religion would much better answer the purpose of supporting and satisfying minds, in the state now supposed. There have been, not long since, some distinguished converts in Germany to the Catholic faith. I could easily conceive of one of them as saying; "here at last I find rest; I find certainty and refuge in the infallibility and absolution of the Holy Church. This, too, is the accumulated support of ages, built on the virtues and sufferings of fathers, and confessors, and martyrs. How, also, am I affected with the real presence of the body of Christ in the sacrament, with the guardianship of saints, and the interceding tenderness of the Holy Mother! I never was so impressed with any religion as this. I never found such joy and peace in any. This is the religion for a *sinner!* This is what my depraved and burdened nature wanted!"

"Yes," replies the sound Protestant, "but it would not move *me*, nor support nor comfort me. The impressiveness of a religion does not depend, altogether, upon its truth or falsehood, but very much on the state of the mind that receives it." And this is what we answer to the Calvinist. We say that Calvinism would make no kindly nor renewing impression on *us*. And as to comfort and support, it seems to us in some of its features, the most cheerless and desolate of all systems.

V. But I must hasten to the last objection that I intended to notice. It is said that there is a fatal coldness in the Unitarian system, that there is no excitement in it, no reality, no seriousness, no strictness; that it is fitted to gratify the proud, the philosophic, the worldly and the vicious.

I must again remind the reader, in the first place, that this is just what new views of religion may expect, and what they have always in fact encountered. It

is no strange thing, that strangers to the practical sense of our principles, should not confess their power. All this cry was raised against the Reformation, as loudly as it is raised against us.

Nay, it may be admitted in the second place, without any prejudice to the cause I maintain, that new views in religion will be most likely to attract the attention of those, who are least prejudiced in favour of the old: that is to say, of the less religious; and of persons, too, who have been less religious, in many instances, for the very reason, that they could not bear the errors of the popular faith. Nay, more; it may be admitted that new views of religion, however true, will probably do injury to some. There are some most extraordinary confessions to this effect, from the lips of the Reformers. New views are liable to unsettle the minds that hastily receive them; and some, that are averse to all religion and to all self-denial, may vaguely hope, that another doctrine would be more indulgent to their vices. Yes, and they may make it so; for what good thing has not been abused? This great subject, in fact, has been so treated and taught, that in religion, most of all, men are apt to show themselves superficial and weak creatures. And it is not strange that those, who have dwelt long in darkness, should be dazzled and bewildered and led astray by the light, or that liberty should be a dangerous thing to be enslaved. What if Christianity had been judged by the state of the Corinthian Church?

And yet Christianity came as a religion of power and strictness, and so I maintain that it still is found to be in the form in which we hold it. If others, who are experimentally ignorant of it, may testify against it; we, who have felt what it is, may be excused if we testify in its favour. And I know that

I speak the language of hundreds and thousands, when I say that religion to us is the one theme of interest; of unspeakable, undying interest. We would not exchange the sense we have of it, for thrones and kingdoms. To take it away, would be to take from us our chief light, blessing, and hope. We have felt the power of the world to come, and no language can tell what that power is, can tell the value of an immortal hope and prospect. We have heard the great and good teacher, and we feel that "never man spake like this man." By him, we trust that we have been brought nigh to God; and this nearness consummates the infinite good, which we embrace in our religion. On all this I might dwell long and abundantly; but I will not trust myself to say, what I feel that I might say for many, lest I be accused of "the foolishness of boasting." And if even for what I *do* say, I *am* so accused, I must adopt the apostle's justification, and say, I have been "compelled." For how can men, who feel that religion is the great resort of the mind, and the living interest, and the animating hope, consent to the charge, that all on this subject is cold and cheerless as death among them! We should be ungrateful for the first of blessings, if we could be silent. We have communed with religion in sorrow, and it has comforted us; in joy, and it has blessed us; in difficulty and trouble, and it has guided and calmed us; in temptations, and it has strengthened us; in conscious guilt and error, and this religion has encouraged and comforted and forgiven us; and we must testify our sense to its value. It is here that we have treasured up the joy and hope of our being; it is here that we have poured out the fulness of our hearts; and if this is to be cold and dead, we ask in the name of sense and truth, what is it to feel? If this is

philosophy, God give us more of this philosophy. Yes, it is philosophy, divine and heaven-descended; it is truth immortal; it is religion, which if it can be carried on within us, will, we are persuaded, through God's mercy, lead us to heaven.

I have now completed the views which, in conclusion, I intended to give to some of the popular objections to Unitarian Christianity. Let me warn every man, in close, to beware of taking any light and trifling views of the religion on which he founds his hope. If any views that ever enter our minds tend to slacken the obligations of virtue, or to let down the claims of piety, let us discard those views at once and for ever. Let us take a viper to our bosom sooner than lay a flattering unction to the soul, that will make it easier in sin. Sin is the sting of death, and it will kill and destroy all that is dear and precious to an immortal creature. Religion only is life and peace; and it is also zeal, and fervour, and joy, and hope, and watchfulness, and strictness, and self-denial, and patience unto the end.

DISCOURSES AND REVIEWS

THE ANALOGY OF RELIGION WITH OTHER SUBJECTS CONSIDERED.

I.

I speak as to wise men: judge ye what I say.—1 Cor. x 15.

It was an observation of an eminent expounder of the science of jurisprudence,* that "the reason of the law is the life of the law; for though a man," says he, "can tell the law, yet if he know not the reason thereof, he shall soon forget his superficial knowledge. But when he findeth the right reason of the law, and so bringeth it to his natural reason that he comprehendeth it as his own, this will not only serve him for the understanding of that particular case, but of many others."

This comprehensive reason is as necessary in religion, as in the law; which, rightly considered, indeed, is but a part of the science of religion or rectitude. The great danger to the mind, indeed, in pursuing every science, is that of being narrow and technical, and so of losing truth, while it is gaining knowledge. For, truth is universal; it is the conclusion derived from those facts, the possession of which we call knowledge. Truth, I say, is universal; and religious

* Lord Littleton.

truth possesses this character as much as any other. What is true in religion, is true in everything else to which such truth is capable of being applied; true in the law, true in moral philosophy, true in the prudence of life, true in all human action.

From this position results the use of an instrument for religious investigation, to which I wish to invite your attention. The instrument I refer to is comparison. I invite you to compare religion with other things, to which it is analogous. Fairly to put this instrument into your hands, to give some examples of its use and application, will require a course of three or four lectures, which I shall give on Sunday evenings.

Let it not be supposed that there is anything new in this mode of investigation. On the contrary, it is so familiar, that it enters more or less into almost every religious discourse. It is justified by the practice of all sorts of religious and moral teachers. It is the only instrument used in that great work of Bishop Butler, entitled his Analogy. All I wish to do is, for a little time, to fix attention upon it.

It is not pretended that this instrument is infallible. The degree of proof, to be gathered from any comparison, depends on the closeness of the analogy. To this point, the closeness of the analogy, the main point in this kind of inquiry, I shall give the most discriminating attention that I am capable of, and shall wish my hearers constantly to judge, as wise men, what I say. The instrument, I confess, is liable to abuse. To give an instance of this: I have heard preachers liken the case of the unconverted sinner to that of a man in a burning house, or in a pestilence, or in peril of shipwreck, and they have advocated and defended the utmost extravagance of spiritual fear and effort, on

the ground that the sinner is in still greater danger. Here is comparison, indeed, but no analogy. There is no analogy, that is to say, in the precise point on which the argument depends. There is analogy, indeed, in the danger, but not in the nature of the danger. In a burning house, or in a shipwreck, the peril is instant; all that can be done for escape, must be done in an hour or a moment; and men are justified in acting almost like distracted men at such a moment. But spiritual danger is of a different character; it is not all accumulated upon a given instant; it is not one stupendous crisis in a man's life, but it spreads itself over his whole being. It is not, like the whelming wave, or the already scorching fire, to bring fright and agony into the mind; on the contrary, the special characteristics of spiritual fear should be reflection, calmness, and intense thoughtfulness. That is to say, it is to be the action of the spiritual, and not of the animal nature. You perceive, therefore, that the instrument I am about to recommend to you, is to be used with great caution, with a wise discretion. In the use of it, I shall constantly hold myself amenable to that judgment of good sense, to which the apostle himself, in my text, appealed. Bishop Butler, in the great work before alluded to, limited the uses of analogy entirely to the purpose of defence. He maintained and showed, that certain facts in nature and in life were analogous to certain doctrines in the Bible; and his argument was, not that the existence of the facts *proved* the truth of the doctrines, but simply that they took away all fair and philosophical objection from those doctrines. Thus, if the consequences of a single sin often follow a man through life, if this is actually a part of God's administration of the affairs of this world, then there is no objection to that doctrine of our Scriptures,

which declares that consequences of a life of sin shall follow the offender into another state. With Bishop Butler's views of what the doctrines of revelation *are*, I have nothing here to do. I have only to say, that I am willing to be governed by a similar caution. I wish to present to you certain rational views of religion, as they appear to me, and these mainly of practical religion; and against the common allegations of insufficiency, shallowness, or untruth, in these views, I wish to appeal to what men allow to be sound and satisfactory and thorough, in other departments of human action and feeling.

There is, however, one objection to this method of inquiry itself, which I must consider before I enter upon it. It is said that religion is God's work in the soul, a peculiar, if not a supernatural work; and hence it is inferred that religion is not to be judged of, on principles common to it with other subjects and qualities. I answer that the conclusion does not follow from the premises. I might deny the premises perhaps, in the sense in which they are put; but for the purposes of the proposed inquiry I need not deny them. I may allow that religion is the special work of God in the soul, which it *is* in a certain sense, and yet I may fairly maintain that it is to be judged of like other principles in the soul. For all Christians, of a sound and reasonable mind, are now accustomed to admit, that God's work in the soul does not violate the laws of the soul; that the influence of the Infinite Spirit, whatever it be, is perfectly compatible with the moral constitution of the being influenced. But *how* is man influenced in other things? The answer is, by considerations, by reasons and motives, by fears and hopes. So is he influenced in religion. All moral influence, whether derived from Scripture, from preaching, from

reflection, or from conscience, is one great and perfectly rational appeal to man's moral nature; and the result is to be judged of accordingly. What religion is true; and what is true in the views presented of the received religion; what are proper and just exhibitions of it; what are the due and right means and methods of cultivating it; and what are its claims upon us; all these matters are to be considered, as we consider other obligations, truths, developments of character and methods of improvement. It is no argument for unreasonableness, for impropriety of conduct or manners, for extravagance, fanaticism or folly, that the subject is religion, or that religion is the work of God in the soul. This, on the contrary, is the strongest of reasons for insisting that religion should be perfectly and profoundly sober, rational and wise. That which comes from the fountain of reason, and as its gift to a rational nature, will not, we may be sure, contradict the laws of that reason and that nature.

This is a point to be insisted on, and the proposed discussion may have special advantages in this view. Indeed, I know of no other way in which the worst practical errors are to be removed from the Church, but by the application of the test in question; by carrying religion entirely out from the walls of conventicles, and the pale of technical theology, and from all the narrow maxims of peculiar religious coteries and sects, into the broad field of common sense and sound judgment. The advocates, whether of a speculative system or of a practical economy in religion, can never tell how it looks, till they see it in this open light, and in its relation to the whole surrounding world of objects. Kept within a certain circle and never looking beyond it, and holding that things may be true in that circle, which are true nowhere else, men may reason in that

circle, and reason strongly, and reason for ever, and never advance one step towards broad, generous, universal truth. Thus it has always been, that mistake, fanaticism, practical error in religious matters, have rested their claims on the peculiar, unusual, supernatural character of the subject. Religious extravagance of every sort has always had its strong hold, within barriers that have shut out the common judgment and sense of the world. Nay, I may add, since I have spoken of comparing religion with other qualities of the mind, that there are many by whom it is yet to be learnt, that religion *is* a quality of the mind. They are apt to consider it as a gift and an influence, rather than as a quality, principle and part of the soul. They consider it as something superinduced, bestowed upon human nature, rather than as the great and just result of that nature. They do not feel as if it were something dear to that nature; something not forced upon its reluctant acceptance, not sustained in its rebellious bosom, but cherished within it, craved by it, welcome and precious to all its strongest affections and noblest faculties. So the *many*, I say, are not accustomed to regard it. They do not see it as the great development of the soul: but they see it as a communication. And seeing it as a communication, as coming, in some supernatural manner, from God, they are apt to set it apart from other qualities and pursuits. They do not deal freely with it. If they do not feel as if it were something *above* reason, they, at least, feel as if it were something with which reason may not strongly and fearlessly grapple; as if it were too ethereal an essence for the plain dealing of common sense. To this plain dealing, however, it must be brought. To this we are justified in bringing it, by the clearest principles of all rational theology; for all such theology

admits, that God does no violence to the laws of human nature, when he works within it both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. And I say and repeat, that to this test of sober and judicious comparison, religion must come, if it is ever to be disabused of the errors that have burthened and enslaved it. How, otherwise, could you proceed, if you had to deal, for instance, with the absurdities of Hindoo superstition? You might try to approach it in other ways; as, for instance, with solemn tones and solemn asseverations; but you would find, at length, that you could do nothing else with it, but to bring it into comparison with other principles and manifestations of human nature and human life. You would say, "this penance of yours, this hanging yourself from a tree, in a burning sun, to die, is absurd, useless, uncalled for by the Deity. Who ever thought of seeking happiness or securing the friendship of any other being, in this way?" And if he were to answer that religion is unlike every other principle in its exactions, and that God is not to be pleased as other beings are, you would undertake to show him, that the principle of goodness is everywhere the same; that God, whose nature is goodness, cannot be pleased with pain for its own sake; that he desires no sacrifice which can effect no good end. That is to say, you would endeavour to reason with the superstitious devotee, upon general principles: upon principles applicable alike to religion and to every other analogous subject.

This is what I shall now attempt to do with religion, by proceeding to some particular instances. The instances, which I shall take up in the remainder of this discourse, belong to the department of first principles; and in them I shall chiefly address the religious skeptic.

I. In the first place, let us look at the very elements of religion. By some it is denied, that there are any such elements. They say that religion is altogether a matter of institution and appointment. They say that it has been imposed upon mankind by priests and by governments; and but for these external influences, they say, that there never would have been such a thing as religion in the world. Let us look at these assumptions in the light of a comprehensive philosophy.

Now, it is to be observed, that the basis of every other science and subject in the world is laid in certain indisputable first principles. In other words, there are certain undeniable facts, either in nature or in the mind, on which, as a foundation, every system of truth is built up. Thus in the natural sciences, in mineralogy, in chemistry, and botany and astronomy, there are certain facts in nature, which are received as the basis. These facts are generalized into laws, and these laws are formed into systems. Newton saw the apple fall, and from this fact he proceeded, till he had established the laws of planetary motion, and the sublime system of the universe. So in the abstract science of geometry, certain unquestionable truths or axioms are laid down; and so in the science of the mind, certain irresistible emotions and acts of the mind are taken, as the ground of each of these departments of philosophy. Even the department of taste has its undeniable first truths. Now, the science or subject of religion has, in the same way, its indisputable first truths. In the mind, there are certain religious facts, as clearly manifested as any metaphysical facts, or any emotions of taste. But how do we come to the knowledge of these latter classes of facts? I answer, by experience, and by nothing else. And how do we come

to the knowledge of the religious facts in the mind? I answer, by the same means, and no other.

What then is the conclusion? Why, that religion has a foundation in our nature as truly as mental philosophy. A man may deny this; he may resort to his presumptuous assertions, and say, that religion is nothing but an imposition, a dogma and a fancy. But he might just as well assert that reason is nothing but an imposition, and a dogma and a fancy. He may point to the diversities of religion, and tell us that everything is denied by one party or another, and thence infer that nothing can be true. But he might as well draw the same inference from the diversified forms, in which the principle of reason has presented itself, whether in the absurd conduct of life, or in the strange history of opinions.

What then, I repeat, is the conclusion? It is this. Religion is true; I do not say that every religion is true. But I say that religion in general, is a true principle of human nature. I say, that there is a real science of religion, a deep-founded and unquestionable philosophy of religion, as truly as there is any other science or philosophy in the world. If experience is the test of truth, religion is true. If universality is the test of truth, religion is true. There never was a nation nor tribe found on earth, in which the feelings of conscience and of adoration were not found. And he, who is ever, at any moment, shaken in his primary religious convictions by the bold assaults of skepticism, may justly rally, and fairly and fearlessly say to his assailant, if any thing in the world is true, religion is true.

II. So then do we lay the foundations of the religious principle; and now let us proceed to consider, in the light *proposed, the evi*dences of that igion, which we

receive as bearing the special sanction of Heaven. And the observation to be made is, that the evidences of Christianity are to be weighed, as other evidences are weighed. And they are, in fact, just such proofs as may be rendered familiar to us, by what passes in every court of justice. In the first place, there are the Christian witnesses; and such witnesses, indeed, as were never produced in any other cause; men not only of unimpeachable character, of great and acknowledged virtue, but who have given in their writings the most extraordinary example of the absence of all enthusiasm that the world can show; men, I say, and such men, who spent laborious and painful lives, and suffered bloody deaths, in attestation, not of some fancy or imagination in their own minds, not of their *belief* that they were *inspired* merely, but in attestation of certain manifest and miraculous facts. And then in the comparison of their testimonies, we have the strongest corroboration of their honesty and truth. On the one hand, there are a few slight discrepancies between them, just sufficient to show that there could have been no collusion; and on the other hand, numerous and evidently undesigned coincidences, both with themselves and with contemporary profane writers, which put the strongest stamp of verisimilitude upon their narrations. And then, again, the moral character of these productions is such as to set their authors above all suspicion of disingenuity; such as to show that dishonest and bad men could not have given birth to them; and such, in fact, as to constitute a strong, independent argument for their divine origin. But I confine myself now to this one branch of the evidence, the *testimony;* and I say that if such a weight of testimony were produced in a court of justice, all the *records of judicial* proceedings could show nothing

stronger, or more satisfactory. I say that men are every day deciding and acting upon a tythe of the evidence that is offered to support the Christian religion. What if there *is* not anything amounting to the force of mathematical demonstration? The case does not admit it; and in the ordinary affairs of life, men do not demand it. Why shall they not, in religion, as in other things, act upon the evidence they have? Suppose that it is less clear to some than to others. Suppose, that it amounts with them only to a strong probability. Suppose that they have doubts. Do doubts paralyze them in other cases? Does not a man make all sorts of sacrifices, become an exile, tread dangerous coasts, breathe tainted climes, for a distant and uncertain fortune? But, has any body *told* him that the wealth he seeks waits for him? Has any miracle been wrought before his eyes? Has God assured him, beyond any doubt, of the fruition of his hopes? Yet he ventures much, ventures all, for the chance of worldly fortune: can he venture nothing for the hope of heaven? Let him walk in the way of the Christian precepts. That cannot harm him, whether there be a future life or not. Let his conduct follow the weight of evidence. No reasonable being can gainsay or condemn him, for being governed by the strongest probability. This is the only safe or wise course. "Let him do the will of God, and he shall know of the doctrine whether it be from God." If he will not do this, if he is averse to the strictness of Christian virtue, he has cause enough to suspect the source of his skepticism. Nay, more; we have a right, in accordance with what is fairly claimed on other subjects, to demand of him, who would investigate the Christian evidences, a religious spirit, and a virtuous temper. He who should undertake to pronounce upon

a great work of genius, a poem or a painting, without any cultivation or congeniality of taste, would be looked upon as an unqualified and presumptuous judge. By the same rule, he who would fairly examine the evidences of a pure system of religion, must, in reason, be a good and devout man; else his investigation is nothing worth. Have infidels often considered this? Have they generally approached the Christian evidences in this spirit?

But let us take some notice, in the third place, and finally, of the Christian records. I say, then, that our Christian books *are to be regarded, in some important respects, as other books are.* Men, for instance, are not to take up the Bible and read it, as if they expected it to do them good, or give them light, in any unusual or unknown way. They are not to expect any illumination in perusing the Scriptures, other than that of reason and piety. Some other may be given in extraordinary cases, but they are not to require miracles. They are not to expect to understand this book because it is the Bible, in any other way, or upon any other principles of interpretation, than they would use to gather the meaning of any ancient book. And as many portions of the Bible, the speculative and controversial parts particularly, are clothed in the polemic phraseology of an ancient age, and have taken their hue and form from ancient disputes, states of mind, customs of society, &c.; as all this is true of some portions of Scripture, the unlearned reader cannot, without more information than most persons possess, reasonably expect to understand those parts at all. Suppose that a plain reader, totally unacquainted with the systems of Plato or Aristotle, or with the Manichean philosophy, should, in perusing an ancient book, meet with a passage crowded with the terms and modes

of thought borrowed from either of these systems. Can you doubt, that with the aid of any common sense he would at once say, "I do not understand this?" Would he not justly conclude that he must read other books, and make himself more acquainted with the speculations of that ancient period, before he could understand the passage which had fallen under his notice?

So he would judge of ancient profane writings, and so he ought to judge of ancient sacred writings. The wisdom that speaks in the two cases is different; but the method of interpreting that wisdom is the same in both. But *so* most Christian readers do *not* judge. They read the Bible, as if it were a modern book. Or, they feel as if it would dishonour the Bible, to suppose that any part of it were necessarily obscure or unintelligible to the unlearned reader. They look upon the Scriptures, as a direct revelation, or as the immediate and express word of God himself, rather than as a series of messages declaring, after the manner of the times, the will of God. And entertaining the former of these impressions, they rightly argue that a book, purporting to be a revelation to mankind, unless all men can readily understand it, is no revelation. But there can be no doubt, I presume, that this impression is a mistaken one. The sacred writers were commissioned to declare certain truths; and they were left to declare them after their own manner, and the manner of the age; and it is no more easy to understand the Bible, than it is to understand *any* ancient book. This *conclusion* must be admitted, whatever may be thought of the *reasoning*. Explain the doctrine of inspiration as we may, it is an unquestionable truth, and every enlightened student of the Bible must know it, that there are considerable portions of it, which cannot be understood without much study, and without, to say

the least, some learning, which the body of the people do not possess. Every sensible man, who has really studied his Bible, must know that this is the case with considerable portions of the Prophecies and Epistles. The people at large are reading these continually, and think to derive benefit from them, and do, no doubt, affix to them some vague meaning; but they do not and cannot understand them. They comprehend what is practical for the most part, and all that is essential; but much of what is speculative and controversial, I repeat it, with their present knowledge, they do not and cannot understand.

This may be a hard saying to many; but I believe it ought not, being unquestionably true, to be withholden. It may be an unpopular doctrine, but that circumstance, I hope, does not prove it unimportant. There certainly is a mistake on this subject; and the greatness of the error is but the greater reason for correcting it. Besides, the error is far from being harmless. This constant reading of what is not well comprehended; this attempt to grasp ideas which are perpetually escaping through ancient and unintelligible modes of thought and phraseology; this formal and forced perusal of obscure chapters with a sort of demure reverence, tends to throw dulness, doubt and obscurity over all our conceptions of religion. The Bible, too, instead of being a bond of common faith and fellowship to Christians, is made an armory for polemics. And there are some controversies among the body of Christians, which can never be intelligently and properly settled, till they qualify themselves in a better manner to understand the Scriptures. And yet multitudes of men and women are confidently deciding controversies on the most difficult questions of philology and interpretation, who never read—not Hebrew

nor Greek—but who never read a book on criticism, who never read a book on ancient customs, who never read a book on the circumstances of the primitive age, on the difficulties and disputes prevailing, on the Jewish prejudices or the Gentile systems of philosophy: and if I were asked what I would give for the critical judgment of these men and women, I answer *nothing —nothing at all.* I derogate nothing from their general intelligence. And their judgment may be good, even on the point in question, as far as their common sense will carry them; and upon the *general strain* of the Scriptures, they may judge well, and may come, *on the whole*, to a right conclusion. But upon deep questions of criticism, they ought not to pretend to judge. I give that credit to the modesty of many among us, as to presume that they do not undertake to decide upon matters of this sort; and to those who have not this modesty, it may be fairly recommended as the first step of a good and sound judgment.

I would particularly guard what I have said on this subject from injurious misapprehensions. I certainly do not discourage the reading of the Scriptures. I only urge the needful preparation for it in regard to those parts which are hard to be understood. I do not say that unlearned Christians cannot understand their religion; for their religion, in substance, is contained in passages that are level to the humblest apprehension. I do not disparage the Bible. Its value consists in the body of its undisputed truths and revelations. Besides, be the case as it may, it can be no disparagement of the sacred volume to state *what it is.* And that it does require study, and learning, to understand portions of it; what do all the labours of learned men, what do innumerable volumes of commentaries,

and whole libraries of sacred criticism show, if they do not show this? Why all these studies, let us ask, if unlearned men can understand the difficult and doubtful passages of their Bibles?

The truth is, in my judgment, that the body of mankind never ought to have been disturbed with those theological disquisitions which involve or require a deep knowledge of criticism, any more than they are with the subtilties of the law, or with the abstruse speculations of philosophy, the disputes of anatomists, metaphysicians and men of science. General readers, not to say those who read not at all, are just as unable to understand one as the other. There are questions in religion, undoubtedly, which are proper for the general mass of readers. And there are points, doubtless, connected with every question, which are suitable for popular discussion. There must be discussion; and since men cannot agree, there must be dispute. Let there be controversy then; and let it range from the highest to the lowest subjects. All I would contend for is, that those controversies, which are addressed to the body of the people, be such as the people are prepared to understand; and that more curious questions be confined in religion, as in other things, to the learned. This reasonable discrimination would have cut off many disputes which, among the mass of the people, are perfectly useless, and might have saved us from some of our unhappy dissensions.

In fine, and to sum up my observations, let Religion —I do not say now as a matter of experience and practice—but let Religion, in its words, its subjects, and its controversies, be treated as other things are; as the Law, Medicine, or any of the Sciences. Let what is practical, what is easily understood, what the simple and sound judgment of a man can compass,

be commended in religion, as in science, to all who can and will read it. Let what is abstruse, what is hard to be understood, what belongs to the department of profound criticism, be left for those who have opportunity, time and learning for it. Let others read their writings as much as they please; but let them not judge till they read; let not their confidence outrun their knowledge. I think this is safe advice. I cannot conceive of any possible harm it can do. I believe it would do much good. I believe that it would tend to the promotion of a practical and affectionate piety among us; and I think, moreover, that it would do this special good: it would lead men to rest their religious hopes and fears, not on matters of doubtful disputation, but on those essential, moral, plain, practical grounds, which are the great foundations of piety and virtue.

I have now presented in a single light, the light of analogy, the first principles of religion, and the evidences and records of that particular dispensation of religion, which, as Christians, we have embraced. In my next lecture, I shall proceed to examine, in the same way, what is usually considered as the beginning of religion, or rather of religious character, in the human mind; in other words, the doctrine of conversion.

II.

ON CONVERSION.

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
John iii. 3.

It will help us to understand the subject of Conversion, and will prepare us to pursue the analogy proposed in this series of Discourses, to take a brief historical view of that language, by which, among theologians, the doctrine has been most commonly expressed: I mean that language which is founded on the figure of a new birth. Three views are to be taken of it: first, of its signification among the Jews; secondly, of its use among the early Christian teachers; and thirdly, of its application to modern Christian communities. And corresponding to this distinction, there are three kinds of conversion to be considered; the Jewish, the ancient Christian conversion, and that which is to be urged among men, already Christian in their education and general belief.

Let me observe, in passing, that the phrases, "born again," "new-creation," &c., are not the only expressions in the New Testament which are applied to the same subject: for men were required to be changed, to be turned from the error of their ways—were said to have passed from darkness to light, from the power of sin and Satan to the service of God and the wisdom of the just. In short, a very great variety of language was used to describe the process of becoming *a good* man, and a follower of Christ.

But the figurative expressions just referred to, have been most constantly used in modern times, to express that change which is meant by conversion. The reason for this, I suppose, is obvious. There has been a striking and manifest disposition, ever since the primitive simplicity departed from religion, to regard and treat it as a mystery: and therefore the most obscure and mysterious expressions have, in preference, been adopted to set it forth. The figure in question, I shall soon have occasion to observe, is less adapted to set forth the spiritual nature of religion, than almost any of the representations that are current in the New Testament.

On every account, therefore, it is desirable that this language should be explained, and that the explanation should be fixed in our minds, even though it should require some repetition to do it.

What, then, is the meaning of the phrase "being born again?"

I. When our Saviour said to the inquiring Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again," we may well suppose, that he did not use language either new or unintelligible to him. Nor would it comport with a proper view of our Saviour's character, to suppose that he used the language of mystery. Nicodemus, indeed, affected to think it mysterious, saying, "how can a man be born when he is old?" It was not, however, because he did not understand, but because he did understand it. For the language in question was familiar at that day; it was in the mouth of every Jew, much more in that of a master in Israel. We learn, from the Jewish writers of that day, that the phrase, "born again," was at that time, and had been all along, applied to proselytes from paganism. A convert, or a proselyte to the Jewish religion, was cur-

rently denominated, "one born again," a "new-born child," "a new creature." This language they adopted, doubtless, to express what they considered to be the greatness of the distinction and favour implied in being a Jew. It was nothing less than a "new creation." In the apparent misapprehension of Nicodemus, therefore, I see nothing but the astonishment natural to a Jew, on being told that he, favoured of God as he had thought himself; that he, one of the chosen people, must himself pass through another conversion, another proselytism, in order to see the kingdom of God.

But to revert to the phrases, which conveyed to Nicodemus this unwelcome truth; I say that they referred originally to proselytism to the Jewish religion. This was the known signification of these phrases, at the time. There can be no dispute or question on this point. Something like this use of these phrases, was common among other nations at that period, as among the Romans, the change from slavery to citizenship was denominated "a new creation." It appears, then, as I have already observed, that this expression is not the best adapted to set forth the spiritual nature of religion, since it was originally used to describe a visible fact, an outward change.

II. But let us proceed from the Jewish use of this language, to the adoption of it among the first teachers of Christianity. It was natural that the Christian teachers, in calling men from an old to a new dispensation, from the profession of an old, to the reception of a new religion, should take up those expressions, which before had been applied to an event precisely similar. There was a visible change of religion required both of Jews and Pagans, the adoption of a new faith and worship. It was an event publicly declared and solemnized by the rite of baptism.

Far be it from me to say, that the Gospel required nothing but an outward profession and proselytism. This was too true of Judaism, though without doubt there were devout individuals among the Jews, who had more spiritual views. But it was too true of that nation of formalists, that they desired little more than to make proselytes to their rites and ceremonies. And on this account our Saviour upbraids them, in that severe declaration, "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more a child of hell than yourselves:" ye proselyte him to your own proud, Pharisaical, and conceited system of cabalistic notions and dead formalities. But surely, if there ever were upon earth, teachers who most strenuously insisted upon a spiritual renovation, they were Jesus and his Apostles. Still, however, we are not to forget, that their language, in reference to the change required, implied an outward proselytism, as well as a spiritual renovation; implied the reception of a new religion, considered as a matter of speculation, faith and visible worship, as well as the adoption of inward feelings, accordant with the spirit and precepts of this religion. Both of these things they must have demanded by their very situation, as teachers of Christianity.

III. The way is now prepared to consider what meaning the language of our text is to have, when applied to *members of Christian communities in modern times*. And the discrimination to be made here is perfectly evident. One part of the meaning, anciently attached to this language, fails entirely: the other stands in the nature of things, and must stand for ever. What fails, is what relates to the outward change. There can be no proselytism to a new faith among us; no conversion to a new worship; no adop-

tion of a new system, nor adherence to a new sect. All the conversion, therefore, that can now take place, is of a purely moral or spiritual nature. It is a change of heart, a change of character, of feelings, of habits. Where the character, the feelings, and habits are wrong, and in such proportion as they are wrong, this change is to be urged as the very condition of salvation, of happiness, of enjoying peace of conscience, God's forgiveness, and the reasonable hope of heaven. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The subject, in this view of it, would seem to be exceedingly plain. Conversion is no mysterious doctrine. It is no peculiar injunction or precept of the Christian religion. It is the injunction and precept of every religion. The bad man must become a good man; the sinful must repent; the vicious must reform; the selfish, the passionate and sensual, must be pure and gentle and benevolent; or they cannot be happy here or hereafter. This, I say, is no mysterious doctrine. It is what every man's conscience preaches to him. Strange would it be, if, in a religion so simple and reasonable as ours, that on which everything in our moral welfare hangs should be a mystery; strange, if a stumbling-block should be placed at the very entrance to the way of religion.

But simple, obvious and unquestionable as these views of conversion are, there is no little difficulty in obtaining for them a general assent, or in causing them to be fully carried out in the minds of those who embrace them. The true and natural view of the subject is confounded with the ancient features of it. We are thinking of something like a proselytism, of a time and an epoch, and a great experience, and a sudden change. We have, perhaps, been taught all this

from our youth up. We have heard about obtaining religion, as if it were something else than obtaining inward habits of devotion and self-government, and disinterestedness and forbearance and all goodness, which it takes a life fully to acquire and confirm. We have heard about obtaining religion, or obtaining a change, or obtaining a hope, as if it were the work of a month, or a day, or a moment. It demands years, or a life, to obtain a great property, or to obtain learning, or to build up a distinguished reputation; while the far greater work of gaining a holy mind, a pure and good heart, you would suppose, from what you often hear, could be accomplished in a single week, or hour.

I do not forget that religion has its beginning; and if the language in common use was, that at such a time, a man began to be religious, instead of having become so, I should have no objection to it. I do not deny that there are epochs in religious experience, times of deeper reflection, of more solemn impression and more earnest prayer; times of arousing to the moral faculties, of awakening to the conscience, of concern and solicitude about the interests of the soul; and I would to God, these times were more frequent in the experience of us all! It was in conformity with this view, that Whitfield said, that "He wished he could be converted a thousand times every day." I do not deny, then, that there are epochs in religious feeling. On the contrary, I believe that the whole progress of every mind and of every life, may, to a considerable extent of its history, be dated from certain epochs. A man will find it to have been so in his mind and in his studies. Certain impressions have been made upon him at certain periods, in consequence of which he has taken up some new study, or pursued the *old with greater zeal*; certain impressions which

have given a bias and character to his whole mind. And those who are pursuing more visible acquisitions than those of the mind, may have found it so with them. At some certain period they began this work; and at other periods they have been stimulated to new diligence; they have resolved to use greater economy, industry and method. There is a beginning, then, and there are epochs in every pursuit; but who ever thought of confounding, as men do in religion, the beginning with the end, the epoch with the progress, the starting place with the goal of attainment? Who ever thought of calling the first enthusiasm of the youthful student, *learning;* or the first crude essays of the young artist, *skill?*

Does it seem to any one, that I do injustice to the popular impressions about religion? Am I reminded that, although men do say that they get religion at a certain time, yet that they are taught, also, that they must grow in this, that they have acquired only the first elements, and must go on to perfection? Still I say, that the *language* is wrong; the language, which implies, that he who has acquired the first elements of such a thing, has acquired the thing itself, is wrong. But, I say more. I say it is a language that leads to wrong. A man, who uses it, will be apt to think he has obtained more than he really has obtained. He will be apt to think more highly of himself, than he ought to think. His language implies too much, and of course it is liable to puff him up with pride; to make him think well of himself, and speak slightly of others, rather than to awaken in him a proper and true humility; and to inspire a rash confidence and a visionary joy, rather than a just sobriety and a reasonable self-distrust. And I say still farther, and repeat, that there are false impressions about religion itself,

derived from these notions of conversion. Religion is not felt to be that result of patient endeavour which it is. It is made a thing too easy of acquisition. He who, in one week, in one day, in one hour, nay, in one moment, can pass through a change that insures heaven to him, has reduced the mighty work to a light task indeed. He may boast over those who are taking the way of patient and pains-taking endeavour; he may charge them with the guilt of insisting much on a good moral life; but certainly he should not boast of his own way as the most thorough and laborious.

But I must dwell a little more particularly, in regard to conversion, on that comparison which I proposed to make between religion and other acquisitions of the mind. And the special point to be considered, the only one, indeed, about which there is any difference of opinion, is the alleged suddenness of conversion. I have already said that this is a feature of the change in question, which is borrowed from the ancient conversion, and borrowed too, from the outward and visible part of it. I now say that it cannot appertain to what is inward and spiritual. No change of the inward mind and character can be sudden. The very laws of the mind forbid it.

But I must not fail to show you that the comparison I am about to make is founded on the strictest analogy. It will be said, I know, that the change we are speaking of is unlike any other, and therefore, that the ordinary processes of the mind furnish no analogy for it. But in what is it unlike? It is a change; a change of heart; a change in the affections, dispositions, habits of the soul. Moreover, it is a change effected in view of motives. A man becomes a good man, not blindly, not irrationally, but for certain reasons. He feels that the evil course is dangerous, and therefore he resolves

to turn from it. He believes that there is happiness in religion, and therefore he seeks it. More than all, he feels that he ought to be a good man, and therefore he strives to be so. But still it may be said, there is a difference; and that the difference consists in this; that conversion is wrought in the soul by the special act of God; that the work is supernatural; that the change is a miracle. Grant that it be so. Suppose it to be true, perhaps it is true, that the secret reluctance of the mind to resist its wrong tendencies, and to restrain its evil passions is such, that a special act of God is always exerted to put it in the right way. But will God, who made the soul, who formed every part of its curious and wonderful mechanism, derange the operations of that soul, in order to save it? Let any one say, if he pleases, that it is a dead soul, a mechanism without any motion, and that nothing but a special impulse from its Former can ever set it in motion. But when it does move, will it not move in obedience to the laws of its nature? This, be it observed, is all that we say, to make out the assumed analogy. Let the cause of its operations be what it will, we say that the laws of its operations will be always the same; in other words, that the religious action of the soul takes place after the same manner, follows the same processes, as all other action of the soul. This, certainly, is the testimony of all experience. No one finds himself becoming religious under any other influence than that of motives of some sort. No man finds it an easier or speedier work to become a Christian, than to pass from ignorance to learning, from indolence of mind to activity, from low to lofty tastes, or from any one state of mind to any other. Our conclusion, then, is based on facts; it is therefore the dictate of philosophy;

and it certainly is, so far as I know, the doctrine of all rational theology.

The processes of religious experience, therefore, are to be judged of like the processes of all other experience. Suppose, then, that you knew a man who was indolent in spirit and infirm of purpose; and that you had sought and found the means, at some favouring moment, to arouse him from his lethargy, and to put him in the path of action. Would you say that in the hour of his first impression, of his first resolution, he had become a man of energy and firmness? Nay, how long would it probably be, before he could be justly said to bear that character? Or, suppose that you knew a parent who neglected the care of his children, and that, inviting him some day to your apartment, you had, by many reasonings, so impressed his mind with the dangers of this course of neglect, that he had resolved to amend; and suppose that by the aid of many such impressions and resolutions, he should, at length, become a good parent. Would you say that you had sent him from your house that day, a good parent? If you did so, I am sure that your sober neighbours would hold your language to be very strange, and would not a little suspect you of being no better than a credulous enthusiast. Or suppose, once more, that having a friend who was devoid of all taste, you should suddenly open a gallery of pictures and statues to him, and thus rouse the dormant faculty. Would you say, on the strength of that first impulse to improvement, he had become a man of taste? Why, then, shall it be said, that a bad man, in bare virtue of one single hour of religious impressions, has become a good man? Religious affections have no growth peculiar to themselves, no other growth than all other affections.

The phrase most frequently used to describe the suddenness of conversion, is that of *obtaining religion*. It is said that, at a certain time, a man has "obtained religion." Now I am persuaded that, if we should separate religion into its parts, or view it under its practical aspects, no such phrase could be found at any given moment, to apply to it. What would be thought of it, if it were said that, at any one moment, a man had obtained devotion, or a gentle disposition! Let a man undertake the contest with his anger; and how long will it take to subdue that passion to gentleness and meekness? How long will it be, before he will stand calm and unmoved, when the word of insult breaks upon his ear, or the storm of provocation beats upon his head! Or let him endeavour to acquire a habit of devotion; and how many times will he have occasion bitterly to lament that his thoughts of God are so few and cold; that he is so slow of heart to commune with the all-pervading presence that fills heaven and earth! Perhaps years will pass on, and he will feel that he is yet but beginning to learn this great wisdom, and to partake of this unspeakable joy. Or to take a word still more practical; what would you think of a man who should say, that, at a certain time, he had obtained virtue? "What idea," you would exclaim, "has this man of virtue? Some strange and visionary idea surely!" you would say, "something different from the notion, which all other men have of virtue." I cannot help thinking that this instance detects and lays open the whole peculiarity of the common impression about a religious conversion. Virtue implies a habit of feeling and a course of life. It is the complexion of a man's whole character, and not one particular and constrained posture of the feelings. Virtue is not a thing that walks the stage for

an hour, with a crowd around it; it walks in the quiet and often lonely paths of real life. Virtue, in short, is a rational, habitual, long-continued course of feelings and actions. And just as much is religion all this. Religion is just as rational, habitual, abiding. What do I say? Religion and virtue are the same thing in principle. Religion involves virtue as a part of itself. And in that part of it which relates to God, it is still just as rational surely, and habitual and permanent in the mind, as in that part of it which relates to man. That is to say, piety is just as much so as virtue. And it is therefore as great and strange a mistake, for a man to say, that he obtained religion at a certain time, as it would be to say, that at a certain time he obtained virtue. Neither of them can be obtained so suddenly.

To sum up what I have said; conversion originally meant two things, an outward proselytism and an inward change. It was the former of these only that was, or could be sudden and instantaneous. An idolater came into the Christian assembly and professed his faith in the true God, and in Jesus, as his messenger. This, of course, was done at a particular time. But this meaning of the term has no application to Christian communities at the present day. Or there was a certain time, when the Pagan or the Jew became convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, and therefore embraced it as his own. And hence it was that faith, rather than love, became the grand representative and denomination of Christian piety. This faith, like every result in mere reasoning, might have its birth and its complete existence on a given and assignable day, when some miracle was performed before its eyes, or some extraordinary evidence was presented. But these ideas evidently cannot apply to

nations brought up in the forms and faith of Christianity.

Anciently, then, conversion was sudden. It was so from the very necessity of the case. But from the same necessity of the case it cannot be so now. That which was sudden in conversion, the change of ceremonies, of faith, of worship, of religion as a system, fails in its application to us; while that which remains, the spiritual renovation of the heart, is the very reverse of sudden; it is the slowest of all processes.

The notice of one or two objections, that may be made to the views now stated, will, I think, clear up all further difficulties with the subject: and with this, I shall conclude my discourse.

In the first place, if the bad man, when he resolves and *begins* to be a good man, is not a good man and a Christian, it may be asked, what is he? and what is to become of him, if he dies in this neutral state? That is to say, if as a bad man he is not to be condemned to misery, nor as a good man, to be raised to happiness, what *is* the disposition to be made of his future state?

To the first question, what is he? I answer, that he is just a man who resolves and begins to be good, and that is all that he is. And to the second question, I reply, that he shall be disposed of, not according to our technical distinctions, but according to the exact measure of the good or evil that is in him. Let us bring these questions to the test of common sense. If an ignorant man, who resolves and begins to learn, is not a learned man, what is he, and what will be his fate? If a passionate man, resolving and beginning to be meek, is not a meek man, what is he, and what is to become of him, in the great and just retribution of character? Do not these questions present and solve

all the difficulties involved in the objection? They are difficulties that belong to a system of theology, which regards all mankind as either totally evil and unregenerate, or essentially regenerate and good; a system which appears to me as much at war with common sense and common experience, as would be that system of practical philosophy, which should account all men to be either poor or rich, either weak or strong, either miserable or happy, and admit of no transition states from one to the other.

In the next place, it may possibly be objected that the views, which I have advanced of a change of heart as slow and gradual, are lax and dangerous. Men, it may be said, upon this ground, will reason thus. "Since religion is the work of life, we need not concern ourselves. The days and years of life are before us, and we can attend to religion by and by." But because religion is the work of a whole life, is that a reason for wasting a fair portion of the precious and precarious season? Because religion is the work of every instant, is that a reason for letting many of them pass unimproved? Because the work of religion cannot be done at once, because it requires the long progress of days and years, because life is all too short for it; is that a reason for never beginning? Because, in fine, the promise of heaven depends upon a character which it takes a long time to form, is that holding out a lure to ease and negligence? I know of no doctrine more alarming to the negligent than this; that the Christian virtue, on which the hope of heaven depends, must be the work not of a moment, but, at the least, of a considerable period of time.

Furthermore; that which is never commenced, can never be done. That which is never begun, can never be accomplished. Be it urged upon every one, then,

that he should begin. Be it urged, with most solemn admonition, upon the negligent and delaying. I care not with how much zeal and earnestness he enters upon the work, if he will but remember, that in any given week or month he can only begin. I speak not against a sober and awakened solicitude, against the most solemn convictions, against the most anxious fears, the most serious resolutions, the most earnest and unwearied prayers. It is a work of infinite moment that we have to do. It is an infinite welfare that is at stake. It is as true now as it ever was, that "except a man be born again," born from a sensual to a spiritual life, born from moral indolence and sloth to sacred effort and watchfulness and faith, born from a worldly to a heavenly hope, he cannot see the kingdom of God. No matter what we call it; conversion, regeneration, or amendment; it is the great thing. It is the burden of all religious instruction. Let no one be so absurd or so childish, as to say, that conversion is not preached among us, because the words "regeneration," "new creation," "born again," are not continually upon our lips. We use these words sparingly, because they are constantly misapprehended. But the thing; the turning from sin to holiness, the forsaking of all evil ways by repentance, the necessity of being pure in order to being happy here and hereafter; what else is our preaching, and your faith? What, but this, is the object of every religious institution and precept and doctrine? What, but this, is every dictate of conscience and every command of God and every admonition of providence? For what, but this, did Jesus die, and for what else is the spirit of God given? What, but this, in fine, is the interest of life, and the hope of eternity?

My friends, if I can understand any distinctions, the

difference between the prevailing ideas of conversion, and those which I now preach to you, is, that the latter are out of all comparison the most solemn, awakening and alarming. If the work of preparing for heaven could be done in a moment, then might it be done at any moment, at the last moment; and the most negligent might always hope. I cannot conceive of any doctrine more gratifying and quieting to negligence or vice, than this. If in candour we were not obliged to think otherwise, it would seem as if it had been invented on purpose to relieve the fears of a guilty, procrastinating conscience. But our doctrine, on the contrary, preaches nothing but alarm to a self-indulgent and sinful life. It warns the bad man that the time may come, when, though he may most earnestly desire to prepare for heaven, it will be all too late. It tells him that no work of a moment can save him. As we tell the student preparing for a strict examination, that he must study long before he can be ready; that no momentary struggle or agony will do it; so we tell him who proposes to be examined as a disciple of Christ, a pupil of Christianity, that the preparation must be the work of years, the work of life. My friends, I beg of you to ponder this comparison. It presents to you the naked truth. He, who would rationally hope for heaven, must found that hope not on the work of moments, but on the work of years; not on any suddenly acquired frame of mind, but on its enduring habit; not on a momentary good resolution, but on its abiding result; not on the beginning of his faith, but on its end, its completion, its perfection.

III.

ON THE METHODS OF OBTAINING AND EXHIBITING RELIGIOUS AND VIRTUOUS AFFECTIONS.

And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.
Luke xxii. 32.

I AM to discourse this evening, on the methods of obtaining, and of exhibiting religious and virtuous affections. In selecting the text, I do not mean to say that it covers the whole ground of this two-fold subject; but I have chosen it, partly because I wish to connect the first topic before us directly with my last discourse, and because the second topic, the methods of exhibiting religion, is distinctly presented, though not fully embraced by the injunction, "strengthen thy brethren."

Let us now proceed to these topics; how we are to become religious; and how we are to show that we are so. On each of these questions, it is true, that a volume might be written; and you will easily infer that I should not have brought them into the same discourse, if I had any other object than to survey them in a single point of view. That point, you are apprised, is the analogy of religion to other subjects, or to other states of mind.

To the question, then, how we are to obtain religious and virtuous affections and habits, the answer is, just as we obtain any affections and habits, which require attention and effort in order to their acquisition. They *ought to* be cultivated in childhood, just as the love of

nature, or the habit of study, or any other proper affection, or state of mind is cultivated. But if they are not; if, as is too often the case, a man grows up an irreligious or vicious man, then, the first step towards a change of heart is serious reflection, and the next step is vigorous effort. The man must meditate, and pray, and watch, and strive. There is no other way to become good and pious, than this. There is no easier way.

And this is the point at which I wished to connect the topic under consideration with my last discourse. For it is not only true, that the demand for long continued effort, for a series of patient endeavours, as the passport to heaven, is more strict than the demand for a momentary change; but the practical results of the difference are likely to have the most direct and serious bearing on the question before us. The question is, how is a man to become religious and good? To this question, there are two answers. One is, that a man is to become religious and good by passing through a sudden change; a change which, if not miraculous, has no precedent nor parallel in all other human experience. The other answer is, that a man is to become religious and good, just as he is to become wise in learning, or skilful in art, so far as the mode is concerned: that is, by the regular and faithful application of his powers to that end, by the repetition of humble endeavours, by the slow and patient forming of habits, by little acquisitions made day after day, by continual watchfulness and effort, and the seeking of heavenly aid. In the former case, the thing that a man looks for, is a sudden and extraordinary change in his affections, wrought out by a special influence from above. And although much is to be done afterwards; yet till this is done, nothing is done. Much is to be done

afterwards, it is true, as a matter of duty; but nothing more is necessary to make out the title to heaven. There is to be a progressive sanctification as a consequence of the change; but salvation depends on the change itself. Everything turns upon this mysterious point of conversion.

Now, can I be mistaken in thinking, that such a reference to this point must tend to derange the whole system of rational motives? Must it not take off the pressure and urgency of the natural inducements to act? Suppose, to resume the comparison, which I made in the close of my last discourse, that a man has before him a certain study to which he ought to attend. He is, perhaps, to be examined upon it a year hence, and on this examination is to depend his introduction into professional life. And to make the parallel complete, suppose that he is averse to study. He is indolent. He puts off the matter to-day, and to-morrow; one, two or three weeks pass, and he has done nothing. But all the while the conviction is pressing harder and harder upon him, that this will never do; that he must begin; and at length he does begin, and proceed, and persevere; nay, he comes to like his task; he enjoys his industry more than ever he enjoyed his indolence; he finishes the work, and gains an honourable place in a learned profession. Now, this man was placed under the natural and healthful influence of motives; and it is under such influences I contend, and through such processes, that a man is to become a Christian. But suppose that this man, the candidate for literary honours, had been looking for some sudden and extraordinary change in his mind, which was to take place, when, or how, he could not tell; it might be in the first month, or in the second, or even in the eleventh month of his probation; a change, too, with-

out which nothing could avail him, and with which, all was safe. Does not every one see that the pressure of ordinary motives is nearly taken off? Does not every one see, that a man so circumstanced is very likely to go on, without ever applying himself thoroughly and resolutely to the work in hand?

And what else, I am tempted to ask, is to account for the apathy and neglect of multitudes towards the greatest of all concerns? Do not tell me, my brethren, that you have escaped this error, because you have embraced more rational ideas of conversion. It is an error, I fear, which has infected the religion of the whole world. Almost all men are expecting to become religious and devout in *some extraordinary way;* in a way for which the ordinary changes of character furnish no analogy. This is the fatal barrier of error that surrounds the world, and defends it from the pressure of ordinary motives. Evils and temptations enough, I know there are, *within* that barrier; but if there be anything without it, if there be anything in the shape of opinion more fatal than everything else to religious attainment; it must be that which interferes with the felt necessity of immediate, urgent, practical, persevering endeavour! The doctrine of sudden conversion, I conceive, is precisely such an opinion. Let such a doctrine be applied to any other subject than relig on, to the attainment of any mental habit, of learning or of art, and I am sure that it would be seen to have this fatal influence. And I fear that it has not only paralyzed religious exertion, but that it has the effect to deter many from all approach to religion; that to many, this extraordinary conversion is a mystery, and a wonder, and a fear. I apprehend that by many it is regarded as a crisis, a paroxysm, a fearful initiatio n into the secrets of religion; and that,

in consequence, religion itself is regarded by multitudes, as the mysteries were in ancient times; that is to say, as a matter of which they know nothing, and can know nothing, till they have passed the gate of initiation; till they have learnt the meaning of this solemn pass-word, conversion. Hence it is that vital religion is looked upon by the mass of the community, as a matter with which they have nothing to do; they give it up to the Church, to converts, to the initiated; and that, which should press down upon the whole world, like the boundless atmosphere, the religion of the sky, the religion of the universe, the religion of universal truth and all-embracing welfare, has become a flaming sword upon the gates of paradise!

I proceed now to the *exhibition* or manifestation of religion. And the rule here is, that a man should manifest his religious affections no otherwise, than as he manifests any serious, joyful and earnest affections he may possess. This, I have no doubt, will appear to be the most interesting and effective, as well as the most proper display of them.

Exhibition, manifestation, display on such a subject, are words, I confess, which are not agreeable to me; and on this point, I shall soon speak. That is seldom the most powerful exhibition of character, which a man makes on set purpose. And therefore I should say, even if it were contended that religion is a peculiar cause committed to the good man, which he is bound to advocate and advance in the world by peculiar exertions, still that he will not ordinarily so well succeed by direct attempt, as by an indirect influence.

But let us take up, for a few moments, the general subject. We are speaking of religious manifestation; and, I say, that a man's religion is to assume no pecu *liar appearances*, because it is religion. I do not say,

no appearances appropriate to itself. All traits and forms of character have, to a certain extent, their appropriate disclosures. So far, religion may have them; but, in consistency with good sense, no farther. Our Lord said to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." A good man should strengthen his brethren; but, in order to do this to the best purpose, he is to strengthen his brethren in religion, no otherwise than he would strengthen his brethren in patriotism, in learning, or in any other cause. That is to say, he is to be governed by the general and just principles of mutual influence. He is to give his countenance, his sympathy, his counsel on proper occasions; but he is not to go about exhorting at all corners, assuming an air of superiority, speaking in oracular and sepulchral tones; if he does so, he will be liable to be considered intrusive, impertinent, and disagreeable. I would speak with a sacred caution on this point. I would quench no holy fire. Our fault is too liable to be reserve. And well can I conceive that there may be times, when a man may fitly and solemnly say, "stand fast, my brother, keep thine integrity;" or emergencies of social temptation, when the zealous Christian may say, "let us strengthen each other's hands, and encourage each other's hearts in the holy cause of duty." The same thing may be done in every other cause, whether of justice or humanity. All that I contend for is, that the same good sense, the same courtesy, the same liberality, shall govern a man in one case, as in the other.

Undoubtedly, a religious and good man will appear on many occasions differently from another man, and differently, in proportion as he is religious and good. But he will not appear so *always*, nor in things indifferent. There may be nothing to distinguish him in

his gait, his countenance or demeanour. Still there will be occasions, when his character will come out; many occasions. His actions, his course of life, his sentiments, on a great many occasions, will show his character. And these sentiments he will express in conversation; so that his *conversation* will be thus far different. But still the disclosures of his character will all be natural. He will show you that he is interested in religion, just as he shows you that he is interested about every thing else, by natural expressions of countenance and tones of voice, by natural topics of conversation and habits of conduct. In short, there will be an appropriate exhibition of religious character, but nothing singular or strange.

Now, for multitudes of persons, this will not do; it is not enough. They want something peculiar. There are many, indeed, who are not satisfied, unless there is something peculiar in the looks and manners of a man to mark him out as religious. Who does not know how constantly a clergyman has been, and still is, to a great extent, known, everywhere, by these marks? And what is more common, than for the new convert to put on a countenance and deportment, which causes all his acquaintance to say, "How strangely he appears!" And many, I repeat, would have it so. They would have a man not only belong to the kingdom of Christ, but carry also some peculiar marks and badges of it. They would have him wear his religion as a military costume, that they may know, as they say, under what colours he fights. But let us remember, that many a coward has worn a coat of mail, and many a brave man has felt that he did not need one. And many a bad man, I would rather say many a misguided man, has put on a solemn countenance, and carried a stiff and formal gait, and got all

the vocabulary of cant by heart; and many a good man has felt that he could do without these trappings of a mistaken and erring piety. Nor let it be forgotten, that just in proportion as this peculiarity of religious manifestation prevails, hypocrisy prevails. It is easier to put on a costume, than it is to adopt a real character. Religion, for its own defence against pretenders, as well as for its usefulness in the world, should demand sobriety, simplicity, naturalness and truth of behaviour, from all its votaries.

I do not mean, in saying this, to confound sanctimony with hypocrisy, or bad taste with bad morals. The same distinctions apply to this, as to every other subject. A man of real learning *may* be a pedant. A man of real skill may lack the simplicity which is its highest ornament. A really able statesman may practise some finesse. A truly wise man may put on an air of unnecessary gravity, or be something too much a man of forms. But we all agree that these are faults. We always desire that all unnecessary peculiarities should be laid aside; that no man should obtrude upon others his gifts or qualifications; that he should leave them to speak when they are called for. In other words, we demand good breeding in every other case; and I say emphatically, that good breeding is equally to be demanded in religion. No man is the worse Christian for being a well-bred man; nor is he, for that reason, the less decided Christian.

Next to the general manners as modes of exhibiting religion, a more specific point to be considered is religious conversation. A man usually talks, it is said, about that which is nearest his heart; and a religious man, therefore, will talk about religion. Every observing person, we may notice in passing, must be aware that there are many exceptions to this

remark; that there are not a few individuals in the circle of his acquaintance, who are not, by any means, communicative on the subjects that must deeply interest them. But there is a still more important distinction in regard to the subject-matter itself.

It is this. A man may talk religiously, and yet not talk about religion, as an abstract subject. A good and devout man will show that he is such by his conversation; but not necessarily by his conversing upon the abstract subjects of devotion and goodness. He will show it by the spirit of his conversation, by the cast and tone of his sentiments, on a great many subjects. You will see, as he talks about men and things, about life and its objects, its cares, disappointments, afflictions and blessings, about its end and its future prospects; you will see that his mind is right, that his affections are pure, that his aspirations are spiritual. You will see this, not by any particular phraseology he uses, not because he has set himself to talk in any particular manner, not because he intended you should see it; but simply because conversation *is* ordinarily and naturally an expression and index of the character. I am not denying that a good man may talk about religion as an abstract subject, or about religious experience as the express subject. All may do this, at times; some, from the habit of their minds, may do it often. But what I say is, that this, with most men, is not necessarily nor naturally the way of showing an interest in religion.

And to prove this, we need only ask how men express, by conversation, their interest in other subjects; how they exhibit other parts of their character, through this medium; this breathing out of the soul in words. A man talks affectionately or feelingly; you see that this is the tone of his mind; you say that he is a per-

son of great sensibility; but does he talk about affection, or feeling, or sensibility, in the abstract? A man talks intelligently; but does he talks about intelligence? Or is it necessary that he should discourse a great deal about good sense, or be perpetually saying what a fine thing knowledge is, in order to convince you that he is an intelligent man? Here is a circle of persons, distinguished for the strength of their family and friendly attachments. All their actions and words show that kindness and harmony dwell among them. But now, what would you think, if they should often sit down and talk in set terms, about the beauty of friendship, or the charms of domestic love? So strange and unnatural would it be, that you would be inclined to suspect their sincerity. You might, indeed, fairly infer one of two things; either that love and friendship with them were matters of mere and cold sentiment, or that these persons had utterly mistaken the natural and proper method of exhibiting their affections.

But there is another kind of religious conversation, which, beyond all others, is thought to furnish the clearest evidence of a man's piety; and that is, his conversing much with thoughtless or unregenerate persons, *with a view to making them religious.* Now here, we are to keep in view the same distinction, that is applied to religion in general. A religious man may well desire to make others religious by his conversation. He may, on proper occasions, converse with them for this very end. But to do this, he need not talk about religion in the abstract, nor expressly about the religious good of the persons he converses with. There may, indeed, be times and relations, in which this personal appeal should be made; but it should not be done as a matter of course and of set form. A man

may impress his acquaintances in this way, I know He may make them feel strangely and uncomfortably He may create in them a sort of preternatural feeling. He may awaken, terrify, distress them. He may, then, by such means, make an impression upon them; but it will not be a good impression. It is planting in the mind the seeds of superstition, which a whole life, often, is not sufficient to eradicate. It is through this process that religion is, with so many persons, a strange, uncongenial, terrifying, distressful, gloomy thing, to their dying day. Why is it not apparent to every one, that this method of proceeding is unnatural, unwise, inexpedient? It is not with religion, that men are impressed in this case, so much as with the manner in which it is presented, with its aspects and adjuncts. And there is reason to fear that with many, religion itself becomes a thing of aspects and circumstances, rather than of the spirit; that it becomes, in its possessor, a peculiarity, rather than a character; a posture and often a distorted posture of mind and feeling, rather than the mind and feeling itself. Men are not *accustomed* to talk about abstract subjects, nor about the soul, as an abstract subject. And if you approach them, awkwardly, as you must do in such a case, and put such questions as, "whether they have obtained religion," or, "what is the state of their souls," they will hardly know what to do with such treatment; they will not know how to commune with you. They may, indeed, if they have a great respect for you, sit down, and listen to the awful communication, and be impressed and overcome by it. But is this the way to exert a favourable and useful influence upon them? Do but consider if this is the way in which men are favourably and usefully impressed on other subjects. A man has a quarrel with his neighbour. You wish to dis-

pose him to peace and reconciliation. Do you begin with asking him what is the state of his soul? Do you ask him whether he has obtained peace? Do you begin to talk with him about the abstract *doctrines* of peace and forgiveness? Let a sensible man be seen communing with his neighbour in a case like this, and he will be found to adopt a far more easy, unembarrassed and natural mode of communication. And, in any case, whether you propose to enlighten the ignorant, to quicken the indolent or to restrain the passionate, every one must know, that a course would be pursued, very different from that which is usually resorted to, for recommending religion.

I have now spoken of the general manners, and of conversation in particular, as modes of exhibiting religion.

But on the general subject of *exhibiting religion*, I have one observation to offer in close. I have spoken, in this discourse, of exhibiting or manifesting religion, because I could find no other brief and comprehensive phrase which would convey the idea; but I am afraid that these phrases themselves are liable to carry with them an erroneous idea. If a man of high intelligence or cultivated taste should think much of exhibiting his intelligence or taste, we should say that he is not very wisely employed. He might, indeed, very properly think of it, if he had fallen into any great faults on this point. But after all, exhibition is not the thing. And the observation, therefore, which I have to make, is this; that the more a man thinks of cultivating religion, and the less he thinks of exhibiting it, the more happy will he be in himself, and the more useful to others. That which is within us, it has been said, "will out." Let a man possess the spirit of religion, and it will probably, in some way or other, manifest

itself. He need not be anxious on that point. On the contrary, there are no persons who are more disagreeable; there are scarcely any who do a greater disservice to the cause of virtue, than *pattern* men and women. Hence it is that you often hear it said, "We cannot endure perfect people." The assumption, the consciousness of virtue, is the most fatal blight upon all its charms. Good examples are good things; but their goodness is gone the moment they are adopted for their own sake. A noble action performed for example's sake, is a contradiction in terms. Let it be performed in total unconsciousness of anything but the action itself, and then, and then only, is it clothed with power and beauty.

I do not mean to dissuade any good man from acting and speaking for the religious enlightenment and edification of others; I advocate it; but that is effort, not exhibition. Yet even then, I would say, let no man's religious action or speech go beyond the impulses of his heart. Let no man be more religious in his conversation, than he is in his character. The worst speculative evils in the popular mind about religion, I fear, are the mingled sense of its unreality, on the one hand, and of its burthensomeness on the other, which spring from the artificial treatment it has received from its professed votaries. Away with set phrases, and common-places, and monotones, and drawlings, and all solemn dulness; and let us have truth, simplicity and power! The heart of the world will answer to that call, even as the forests answer and bend to the free winds of heaven; while amidst the fogs and vapours that rise from stagnant waters, it stands motionless, chilled and desolate.

IV.

CAUSES OF INDIFFERENCE AND AVERSION TO RELIGION.

For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.—Luke xvi. 8.

I AM to speak in this discourse of the causes of indifference and aversion to religion; and my special purpose, in the analogy which I am following out in these discussions is, to inquire, whether the same causes would not make men indifferent or averse to any other subject, however naturally agreeable or interesting to them. Let philosophy, or friendship, or native sensibility; let study, or business, or pleasure even, be inculcated and treated as religion has been, and would not men be averse to them?

It is possible that I have a hearer who will think that he solves the problem by saying, that men's aversion to religion is owing to the wickedness of their hearts. That would be to solve a problem with a truism. The aversion to religion *is* wickedness of heart. I am sensible, and it will be more apparent as we proceed, that this is to be said with important qualifications. But still it is true that this state of mind is wrong. And the question is, why does this wrong state of mind exist? In other words, whence is this aversion to religion? It may be said, with more pertinence I allow, that the cause is to be found in the depravity of human nature. This *is*, indeed, assigning a cause. *And it is,* moreover, bringing the subject to

a point, on which I wish to fix your attention. For so far from admitting this to be true, I think it will be easy to show that men may be made, and *are* made, indifferent or averse to worldly objects, to objects allowed to be congenial to their nature, by the same causes which make them indifferent or averse to heavenly objects, the objects of faith and duty.

I. The first cause which I shall mention is *neglect.* There are many sciences and arts and accomplishments, which are most interesting, and naturally most interesting to those who cultivate them, but entirely indifferent to those who neglect them. We see this every day. We find different men in the opposite poles of enthusiasm and apathy, on certain subjects; and the reason is, that some have been familiar with them, and others have been completely estranged from them. The most interesting and fascinating reading has no attraction for those, who have passed the most of their lives without ever taking up a book. It is, in short, a well-known law of our minds, that attention is necessary to give vividness and interest to objects of human thought.

The first cause of indifference to religion, then, is neglect. It may be said that all are taught; that the subject is constantly urged upon their attention from the pulpit. But the example and daily conversation of their parents and friends, who have showed no interest in religion, have been more powerful far than the words of the preacher. The real and effective influences of their education have all tended to neglect. The actual course of their conduct has come to the same thing. They have never attended to religion, either as the merchant attends to business, or as the farmer attends to soils, or the mechanician to his art, or, to come nearer to the point, as the student attends

to philosophy, or as the virtuoso to matters of taste, or even as the sketching traveller attends to scenery, or as the man of pleasure to amusement; or, in fine, as any man attends to anything in which he would be interested. It is not in this way, at all, that they have thought of being religious, but in some more summary, in some extraordinary way: and multitudes, who would think it preposterous to expect to be interested in a literature or language, of which they have never read anything, have never in their lives attentively read one book about religion, not even the Bible.

I am quite sensible, while I make these comparisons, that there is a general attention to religion more important than any specific study of it: an attention, that is to say, to the monitions of conscience, to experience, to the intimations of a providence all around us, to the great example of Christ that ever shines as a light before us. But it is this very attention, as well as the specific study, in which men have been deficient. And then, as to the specific study, I say, it is to be advocated on grounds similar to those which recommend it in every other case. A man may be religious without reading books, I know. So may he be an agriculturalist or mechanician without reading books. But the point to be stated, for him who reads at all, is that he will read on the subject on which he wishes to be informed and interested; and so we may say, that he, who studies at all, will study on the subject that is nearest his heart; and that he, who adopts forms and usages in any case, will avail himself of forms and usages in this. So that he, into whose life no specific religious action enters, gives no evidence of general attention.

Still, then, I repeat, there must be attention, both general and particular. No man can reasonably

expect to be religious without it. It is not enough passively to be borne on with the wave of worldly fashion, now setting towards the church, and now towards the exchange, and now towards the theatre. It is not enough to be as religious as chance and time and tide will make us. There must be a distinct, direct religious action, a hand stretched out, an eye looking beyond, a heart breathing its sighs and secret prayers for some better thing. But with multitudes this distinct action of the soul has never been put forth. And it is no more surprising that they are not Christians, than it is that they are not astronomers or artists.

II. The next cause of indifference and aversion to religion is to be found in the character, with which some of its most attractive virtues are commonly invested. Let us consider a few of these, and compare them with other affections and sentiments.

One of the Christian virtues, much insisted on, is *love of the brethren.* The analogous sentiment is friendship. Now I ask, would friendship be the attractive quality that it is, if it were inculcated and represented in the same way as love of the brethren? If friendship were constantly insisted on, as a test of character, as the trying point on which all future hopes rest; if a man were constantly asked whether he loves his friends, in the same way in which he is asked whether he loves the brethren, and thus were made to tremble when that question is asked; if, then, the affection of friendship were required to be exercised with so little reference to all the natural charms and winning graces of character; if, again, friendship must find its objects within a sphere so limited, among men of a particular sect, or among church-members only, or among speculative believers of a certain cast; and if, moreover, friendship were to express itself by such

methods as brotherly love usually does, by set and precise manners, by peculiar actions, by talking of its elect and chosen ones, as Christians have been wont to talk of each other: if, I say, all this belonged to friendship, do you think it would wear to men's eyes the charm and fascination that it now does? Would they rush to its arms; would they seek it, and sigh for it, as they now do? No; friendship itself would lose its grace and beauty, if it were set forth as the love of the brethren usually is. No wonder that men are averse to such an affection. But would they have been equally averse to it, if it had been represented as but a holier friendship; the friendship of good men; which it is, and which is all that it is?

Again; hope is a Christian virtue. It is also natural affection; and as a natural affection, it attracts every human heart. It "springs eternal" and irresistible in every human breast. Its eye kindles, and its countenance glows, as it gazes upon the bright future. But would it be this involuntary and welcome affection, if it bore the character that evangelical hope has assumed, in the experience of modern Christians? I say of modern Christians; for the ancient hope was a different thing. It was the hope of those "who sat in the region and shadow of death," that they should live hereafter: it was a hope full of immortality; full of the sublimity and joy of that great expectation. But now, what is the modern feeling that bears this name, and how does it express itself? It says with anxiety, and often with a mournful sigh, "I *hope* that I am a Christian; I hope that I am pardoned; I hope that I shall go to heaven." Would *any* human hope be attractive, if this were its character? Is it strange that men do not desire to entertain a hope, that is so expressed?

Once more; faith holds a prominent place among

the Christian virtues. In its natural form, it is one of the most grateful of all affections. Confidence; confidence in our friend; what earthly repose is equal to this? The faith of a child in its parent; how simple, natural, irresistible! And how perfectly intelligible is all this! But now do you throw one shade of mystery over this affection; require it to assent to abstruse and unintelligible doctrines; require of it a metaphysical accuracy; demand it, not as the natural, but as some technical or mystical condition of parental favour; resolve all this into some peculiar and ill-understood connexion with the laws of the divine government; and the friend, the child would shrink from it; he would forego the natural affections of his heart, if they must be bound up with things so repulsive and chilling to all its confiding and joyous sensibilities.

I may observe here, that these three virtues, brotherly love, hope, and faith, derive from the circumstances of the early age a prominence and a peculiarity, which ought since to have passed away. When the Christians were a comparatively small and persecuted band, and had a great cause committed to their fidelity, it was natural and proper that the tie between them should be peculiar. Hence their letters to one another were constantly filled with such expressions as, "Salute the brethren," "Greet the brethren." Those brethren were perhaps one hundred or five hundred persons in a city; known and marked adherents of the new faith; who met together in dark retreats, in old ruins, in caves or catacombs. But all this has passed away. And now it would be absurd for a man, however affectionately and religiously disposed, in writing letters to any town or city, to send salutations and greetings to all the good people in those places.

Christians now stand in the general relation to one another of good men; not of fellow-sufferers, not of fellow-champions of a persecuted cause. It is precisely the difference between compatriots fighting for their liberty, and fellow-citizens quietly enjoying it.

In like manner, Christian faith, when it was necessarily the first step in religion, when it came to fill the void of skepticism; and Christian hope, when it sprung from the dark cloud of despair, both derived from the circumstances a singular character and a signal importance. And the circumstances justified a peculiar manner of speaking about them. Hope was indeed a glorious badge of distinction in a world without hope: and faith was, indeed, a pledge for the highest virtue, when it might cost its possessor his life. But *now* to speak of faith and hope with a certain mysterious sense of their importance, is to present them in a false garb; it is to clothe, with an ancient and strange costume, things that ought to be familiar; and it is therefore to cut them off from our natural sympathy and attachment.

III. The third cause of indifference and aversion to religion, and the last which I shall mention, but on which I shall dwell at greater length than I have upon the former, is to be found in the mode of its inculcation.

To show that men may be made averse to objects naturally and confessedly interesting to them, by an unfortunate teaching, and to point out the manner of that teaching, I shall draw two illustrations from the pursuit of knowledge.

It will not be denied, that for knowledge in general the human mind has a natural aptitude and desire. But do the children, in the most of our schools, love the knowledge that is inculcated there? Have they as

sociated agreeable ideas with their class-books and school-rooms, and with the time they pass in them? What is the occasion of this insufferable tediousness that so many of them experience, in the pursuits of elementary learning? How is it, that they so often find the form, on which they sit, an almost literal rack of torture; and the hours of confinement lengthening out like the hours of bondage? Do we talk of men's aversion to religion? Why, here is aversion to knowledge, as strong and obstinate, as that of hardened vice itself to religion. What causes it? Not that nature, which was as truly made to love knowledge, as appetite to love food; but circumstances have disappointed the natural want, till it is perverted and stupified, so that it scarcely appears to belong to the nature of the human being.

Again; the science of astronomy is held, by all who understand it, to be a most interesting, an almost enchanting science. No one can doubt that, if properly introduced to the mind, it would prove extremely attractive and delightful. Nor let it be said, to destroy the parallel which I am exhibiting, that knowledge has no natural obstacles in the mind to contend with, while religion has many. Religion finds obstructions, indeed, in human nature; but so also has knowledge to contend with the love of ease, with sloth, with physical dulness, with pleasure and worldly vanity

Now suppose that the teacher of astronomy comes forward to instruct his pupil; and that he at once adopts a very unusual, very formal and repulsive manner; that he tells him with reiterated assurance that he *must* learn this science, and yet fails to show any very perceptible connexion it has with his interest, his dignity or happiness. Suppose further, that the teacher informs his pupil, that he has the strongest

natural aversion to the science in question; that this aversion is so strong as to amount to an actual inability to comprehend it; that it is absolutely certain that he never will learn it of himself; that his only chance of success lies in the interposition of divine power; that all his exertions to learn give him no claim to understand what he is inquiring after; that if he succeeds, it will be no merit of his, and that if he fails he will be utterly ruined, and for ever miserable, and will richly deserve to be so. Suppose, I say, all these influences to attach themselves to one of the most beautiful science ever commended to the human mind; suppose all the strange instructions, the fearful agitations, the tremendous excitements of hope and fear, the unnatural postures of mind, the violence to reason, the mocking of effort, the mysteries of faith and the extravagances of conduct, that must arise from so extraordinary an intellectual condition of things; and do you believe that any object or pursuit would be likely to be loved in such circumstances? Would you say, in such a case, that the science in question had any fair chance or trial?

But let us now come to the direct teaching of religion itself. What are the causes that prevent its grateful and hearty acceptance? What are the causes, I mean, which exist in the teaching itself; for I am not, at present, concerned with those which exist in the perverseness of the human will. To this question, I shall answer, that the teaching is apt to be too formal, too direct, and too abstract.

First, it is apt to be too formal. The parent, the teacher, the friend, does not neglect the subject, perhaps, nor does he misconceive it; his views are rational and just; he sees what religion is, and would teach it; but *how does* he teach it? Himself, perhaps

possessing but little of holy familiarity with its objects, he speaks to his child or his pupil, with a constrained manner, speaks, as if he were set to do it, and as if it were a task. He feels the duty of imbuing with religious sentiment the mind that is committed to him; but the gentle and holy voice is not in his own heart, and without intending it, he adopts an artificial tone. He speaks on this subject as he speaks on no other. His words want all the winning grace and charm of natural sensibility. In short, he is a formalist in religion, and a formalist in teaching it. Formal as all other kinds of education have been, none has been so dreadfully smitten with this taint, as catechising, and the inculcation of Bible lessons, and the teaching of prayers, and talking of God.

Now, everything unnatural in manner is repulsive to us. It is scarce speaking too strongly, to say, that we hate it. We fly from it when we are children; we revolt from it when we are men. There is nothing in social manners that is more intolerable than affectation. But especially, I think, is it the instinct of children to shrink from everything formal in manner. Their minds put forth every power of resistance to it, as their limbs would resist the compression of some torturing instrument. Might religion but have come forth from all its artificial peculiarities and forms of singularity and fetters of restraint; might it have talked with us as other things talk with us; might it only have won us, as kindness, friendship, love win us; how different would now have been the state of religious sentiment and affection, in the hearts of thousands around us!

I am speaking of direct influences; and I now add, that they may be too direct for the best impression. Perhaps, indeed, it is one of the inevitable errors of

the formalist, to make them so. He, who is not heartily and wholly interested in religion, will be very apt to make the inculcation of it a set business; and then it certainly *will* be too direct. It will take the form of direct command, and say, "You must do this or that; you must love God;" rather than express itself in easy and unrestrained and unpremeditated conversation. I am inclined, indeed, to say that, in general, the strongest feelings choose indirect modes of manifestation. I remember once to have heard of a prayer on a very affecting occasion, and where the speaker was most of all interested, in which it was said, that every word bore reference to the occasion, and, yet the occasion was never once directly alluded to. I confess that that appeared to me, as the very highest description that could be given, of delicate and strong sensibility. It is not necessary to be direct in order to be impressive; the very contrary is more apt to be true. And he who can think of no way to impress religion, but broad, open-mouthed and urgent exhortation or entreaty, understands neither religion nor human nature.

The common fault of parents certainly is, to do too little; but there are ways in which they may do too much. It has been justly said that nothing can be worse, than to be always pointing out *the moral of a story* to children. They do it for themselves; and for another to do it for them, after they have done it, is often felt by them to be degrading and irritating. I think that some of the worst children and young people, that I have ever kown, are those, into whose ears moralities and fine sentiments have been for ever dinned with wearisome repetition and minuteness. This accounts for the false maxim which you sometimes hear, that the best parents often have the worst children. Such parents, I know, are often what

are called very good people, very exemplary persons; extremely anxious, they are said to be, for the improvement of their children; and so they are in a sense; and yet I have been sometimes tempted to say, that heartless, formal, wearisome domestic lectures on religion and virtue, do more hurt than any people in the world. The worst and most abandoned of men make *vice* odious; *they* make *virtue* so. And the feelings of the children, bad and insensible as they are apt to become, do really evince, though unhappily, the dignity of human nature; they show that virtue was not designed to be poured into the ear in dinning precepts or dull complaints, but to be the offspring of an inward energy, self-wrought, self-chosen; influenced, indeed, by arguments from without, but drawing its own inference, bringing out, from communion with itself and with the spirit of God, its own free and glorious result.

I shall not be thought, certainly, in these remarks, to oppose the religious education of children. I am speaking of the form of teaching, and not of the fact. The only question is about the best mode; and into this, I maintain, that less of direct inculcation and more of indirect influence, should enter, than is common. Nay, I maintain that the stern and solemn enforcement of lessons and readings has effectually alienated many from religion. It was the manner, I repeat, rather than the act. The Bible may certainly be taught, and catechisms may be taught in the form of direct lessons; they may be successfully taught, if the manner be easy and kindly; and, I think, that Sunday schools, where a large company of children are brought together, and the free and joyous spirit of childhood pervades the place, are likely to give *freedom* and ease to the manner of teaching. Religi-

ous teaching is thus becoming like common-school teaching, and on this account, is doubtless exposed to some dangers; but it is likely to have the advantage of throwing off the usual manner of direct, peculiar, superstitious appeal to the heart, singling out its object, and fixing upon it the eye of authority and warning. So important and critical is this point *of manner*, that a visible and painful anxiety to have a child excel in anything, even in virtue, does not appear to me to be wise; to urge even this, by constant hints and exhortations, and especially with an air of dissatisfaction and complaint, is not expedient. The human affections are not to be won in this way. They are not so won to other objects; why should we expect them by such means to be attracted to religion?

Finally, as we teach religion too formally, and often too directly, so do I think that we teach it too abstractly. There is one particular affection on which I shall bring this observation to bear, and that is the love we should cherish towards our Creator. To this sentiment, I allow that there are some natural obstacles. They are found in the invisibility and infinity of the divine nature. These obstacles, I think, however, are exaggerated; and they are, by no means, so great as those which are created by our own mistakes.

When children are acquiring their first ideas of God and of their duty to him, I apprehend that many things are taught and told them, which, although true and right in themselves, are inculcated too abstractly; that is, too little with reference to the minds that are to receive them. The parent teaches his child, as the first thing, perhaps, that God *sees* him continually, in the darkness and in the light; and the thought of that awful eye fixed upon him, distresses and frightens him. Or the child is taught with too little explanation, that

God is displeased, is angry with him, when he does wrong; and how little does he understand the considerate and compassionate displeasure of his Creator! Or he is taught to pray, and obliged to go through with that formal action, without its being made a sufficiently sincere, grateful and real homage. And he is especially taught all this on Sunday. Sunday, he is told, is the Lord's day. And it is made to him, perhaps, the most disagreeable day in the week. Alas! how far does the experience of those tedious hours, penetrate into his life, and into the whole religious complexion of his being! How often is that hurtful influence reasoned away, and how often does it come back again, and disturb, perhaps, the most rational Christian, even on his dying bed!

The first idea, it should be remembered, which a child can gain at all, of moral qualities, is from the experience of his own heart. That is the undoubted, and now conceded philosophical truth. *There*, then, should begin the child's idea of God. From the love within him, he should be taught that God loves all beings. And so, from the moral approbation or displeasure he feels in himself, he should be taught how God approves the good and condemns the bad. Next, his parent should be to him the image of God; and from his love of that parent, and from all that parent has done for him, he should be led to consider how easy, and how reasonable it is, that he should love God. God should be made a present being to him, near and kind, and not the image of a being, a monarch, or a master, seated on a throne, in the far distant heavens.

The common method of teaching, I fear, instead of this, is extremely artificial, technical and constrained, *and very little* adapted to make any clear or agreeable

impression. And I am persuaded, that the same method adopted in regard to an earthly parent, would powerfully tend to repress the filial sentiment towards him.

Let me dwell upon the comparison a moment, and with a view to illustrate the three faults of inculcation on which I have now been insisting. In order to make the cases, as far as may be, parallel, we must suppose the parent to be absent from his child, absent, let it be imagined, in a foreign country, and his child has never seen him. And now my supposition proceeds.

The child is told of his parent. But how told? I will suppose it to be, with a manner always strange and constrained, with a countenance mysterious and forbidding, with a tone unusual and awful. Instead of being taught to lisp amidst his innocent prattlings, the name of *father*, to speak of that name as if there were a charm about it, to associate with the idea of that father, all brightness, benignity and love; instead of all this ease, simplicity and tenderness, he is called away from his sports and pleasures, is made to stand erect and attentive, and then he is told of this father. He is told, indeed, that his father is good and loves him; but the words fall lightly on his ear; they make little or no impression on his mind; while the manner, the countenance, the tone, sink into his heart, and tell him far more effectually, that there is something strange and stern about this father, and that he cannot love such a being. Yet this is the very thing on which the main stress is laid. He is told that he must love his parent. He is constantly urged and commanded to love him. He is warned continually that his father will be very much displeased, if he does not love him. He is admonished that all the good things he enjoys were sent to him by his father; and he is exhorted to

be grateful. Besides, he is shown a book, a fearful book, of laws, which this parent has written for him to obey. And to complete this system of influences, he has it continually held up before him, that, ere long, his father will send for him, and if he should find a defect of duty, gratitude and love, he will cast him into a dismal prison, where he will be doomed to pass his whole remaining life in misery and despair!

I need not point out the moral of this comparison. Alas! how many *extraneous* causes have there been to sever the heart from its great native trust; the trust in an Infinite Parent! I say not this, to reproach any man, or any body of men. In this matter, I fear that we have all gone out of the way. I lament the defects of every kind of religious education and influence with which I am acquainted, and am persuaded that they have done much to spread around us the prevailing indifference and aversion to the most vital and vast of all concerns. I do not reproach my religious brethren then, who, with myself, I ought to believe, have meant well and erred in honesty, and whose attention I would invite, as I have given my own, to a serious consideration of this subject.

But I cannot leave the subject, without addressing one emphatic remonstrance to those with whom religion is a matter of indifference or dislike. I entreat such to distrust the influences under which they have come to that result. I am sure that I have said enough to show them, that any subject would have failed to interest them under the same influences; the influences of neglect, of misconception, and of mistaken treatment. It is not the bright and glorious truth of heaven that is in fault. It is not your own nature that is in fault. It is not the beneficence of God that has been wanting to you. But human error has been

flowing in all the streams of life around you; and an erring heart within, has too easily suffered petrifaction and death to steal into all its recesses. Oh! let a new life be breathed there; and you shall find that religion is no form, no irksome restraint, no dull compliance with duty merely, but spirit, but freedom, but life indeed; life to your heart; the beginning of a higher life, of the life everlasting!

ON THE

ORIGINAL USE OF THE EPISTLES

OF THE NEW TESTAMENT,

COMPARED WITH THEIR USE AND APPLICATION AT THE PRESENT DAY

I.

To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.—Cor. ix. 22.

THAT is to say, Paul adapted his religious instructions to the men whom he addressed, to their particular character, circumstances, difficulties, trials and speculations. "Unto the Jews, he says, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law." From this statement, we derive the following principle of interpretation, viz., that Paul, and it may be added, that all the sacred writers, did not deliver their instructions in an abstract and general form adapted alike and equally to all times, but that they had a local and special reference to the times in which they wrote. It was in conformity with this principle, that the Apostle said to the Athenians, "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent;" and to the Corinthians, he gave advice adapted to a particular

occasion, saying, "I suppose that this is good for the present distress"—that is the instruction which I give you is suited to the present exigency.

As I propose to apply this principle of interpretation to some subjects in the Epistles of the New Testament, I wish to place it distinctly before you, and in the outset, to guard it from misapprehension. It may at once be asked, if the Scriptures were not written for all men. Let us then explain, and it will be seen, I think, that the Bible could not to any valuable purpose, have been written for all men, if it had not been written for some men in particular.

The Scriptures not only bear marks of belonging to the periods and persons that produced them, but they bear marks of perpetual adaptation to the state, the opinions, the prejudices, in one word, to the moral wants of the men to whom they were immediately addressed. When God commissioned prophets and apostles to be the instructers of the world, he did not bereave them at once, of their reason, their common sense, their observation. He rather taught them more clearly to perceive, and more keenly to feel the situation, the difficulties, the fears and hopes, the sorrows, the dangers of those to whom they directed their message. He filled their hearts with peculiar solicitude and sympathy for the very persons to whom they were sent. How, then, could they fail to address themselves to the particular state and case of these persons! Indeed, all true feeling, all tender sympathy, all fervent religion is from its very nature specific and circumstantial. It does not waste itself in barren generalities. It has some specific objects, over which it meditates and is anxious; over which it ponders, and hopes and prays.

There is a very striking character of this kind in our

Scriptures, and one that distinguishes them, as far as I have observed from all other systems of philosophy and religion. The instructions of the Bible are local, circumstantial, specific. We have not in them a few cold and general precepts, some wise sayings, some sententious paragraphs, some mottos of moral speculation. We hear not in them the staid and haughty philosopher who can scarcely condescend to lay down the law to his ignorant fellow-mortals. We hear not the grave impostor, who would make up for his heartlessness and hypocrisy by an air of wisdom and pretension. The Christian teachers did not pause in stately halls or retired groves to deliver their messages, but they went down into the crowd of men, into the places of domestic abode; they penetrated into the recesses of human feeling; they communed with human frailty and human sorrow and joy: they had something for every mind. They entered into the circumstances of men, into their daily wants and trials. It is this that has communicated such a spirit and charm to their writings. They would never have found the deep springs of human thought and emotion (let the truism be pardoned) if they had not searched for them where they actually were. And they could not have searched for them, but by removing the rubbish of systems and speculations, of errors and prejudices which was thrown over them: that is to say, but by applying themselves to the circumstances and feelings of the time.

What we say is, that the inspired teachers wrote for men; for men of the very period and nation, of the very customs and character, in the midst of which they lived. They wrote for all men, indeed, but they could not, I repeat, have done this, if they had not written for *some men* in particular. And to understand their writ-

ings, we must consider that they took their form and colouring from the state of things which required them.

We must add that all this is especially applicable to the Epistles of the New Testament. These, indeed, were particularly called forth by the exigencies, the difficulties, the trials, of the primitive churches. Indeed if men had received the simple doctrine of Jesus without objection or difficulty, if no contentions and controversies had sprung up, if no mistakes nor offences had arisen, these Epistles would never have been written. Some instructions the Apostles might have given, and given in the epistolary form, but their epistles would not have borne the same controversial aspect, and there would not have arisen from them in subsequent ages, the same disputes about conversion and election, the atonement and the Trinity. There would not in short have been the same difficulties in the interpretation of these Epistles. They took their form from circumstances; and with these circumstances we have, and can have, but a partial acquaintance. But that they did impart an influence, that the Epistles were written for the age, there can be no doubt. You see the marks of adaptation in every sentence. There are many things in them that apply exclusively to the early Christians, that can apply to no others. Such, for instance, are the answers to questions, the solution of difficulties, the settlement of disputes, which have long since passed away. Such, too, is what relates to the use of prophetical and miraculous powers, to meats offered to idols, &c. These things do not *now* concern us; because we have no miraculous powers, and there are no idols to solicit our offerings. Will any man say, there is an idol in our hearts? Now, this is the very sort of liberty with the Scriptures, to which I feel compelled to object;

this spiritualizing, this work of fanciful analogies, this attempt to make the Bible mean all that it can mean, under the notion of doing honour to it. It is both unjustifiable and injurious. The Bible addresses us as reasonable men; let us read it as reasonable men.

I should not have dwelt so long on the very obvious principle that has now been discussed, were it not a principle that is scarcely yet admitted into the prevailing theological speculations of our times, and a principle too whose importance is quite equal to the neglect into which it has fallen.

Indeed, it cannot fail to have been observed, that the habit of applying the language of the Epistles, without any qualification, to the subjects of Christian experience and of Christian speculation in later times, has been one of the most fruitful sources of error in every form; that it has above all other means, fostered the confidence of sectarians; that it has gratified the pride of the weak, and the fancy of the extravagant; and that by this means, bold and ignorant men especially; the unlearned and unstable, have wrested the Scriptures to their injury. Such men have always been found turning away from the simple instructions of Jesus, to the high mysteries of Paul, and the former have often passed for little better than flat morality, while the latter, circumstantial, local, involved in the shadows of an ancient age, and even then, "difficult, and hard to be understood," have been exclusively studied as containing the high system of doctrine and essence of all spiritual religion.

There is, indeed, what must have struck every attentive mind, a very remarkable difference between the instructions of our Saviour and his Apostles; but it was a difference chiefly owing to circumstances. It was a difference not in the substance, but in the form,

in the topics of religious instruction. Our Saviour's teaching was evidently more simple, and more entirely practical. It dealt more in easy and intelligible expositions and illustrations of truth and duty, of piety and acceptance with God. Our Saviour was announcing a system which had not yet encountered objection. It could not meet with objection till it was announced. But the Apostles had to contend with a world of objectors of every description. Hence their instructions became more speculative, more complicated, more intermixed with the institutions and ideas and prejudices of the age; and in just that proportion, they became more argumentative and obscure. I say, that the Epistles contain nothing in the substance of religious instruction that is new. But whether they do or not; whether the novel aspect which they bear, is in any measure, given by new information; it is very certain that *much* of it is the colouring of circumstances. And it is from a neglect to consider these circumstances; it is from neglect to observe the local application of these ancient writings, that such a strange and mischievous use has been made of them; that bad and erroneous notions of religion still prevail among many; and that with all, a veil of obscurity still remains in the reading of them.

But there is a danger on the other hand. There is danger of forgetting in the local application of these writings, that they have any other; of supposing that they had not only a special, but an exclusive reference to ancient times; and danger, therefore, of suffering them to fall into neglect, and of leaving out of sight that practical import, which belongs to all periods. In opposition to this impression that the Epistles had an exclusive reference to their own age, it is sufficient to observe, that it is incompatible, in the first place, with

the very nature of moral writings, and in the second place, with the prophetic views of the Apostles, who evidently considered themselves as dispensing truths which would be interesting to all times.

It becomes very important therefore, to consider what in the Epistles was peculiar to the times in which they were written, and what belongs to us; that we may be guarded from obscure and erroneous views of them on the one hand, and from a negligent and indifferent regard to them on the other. Some attempt is therefore proposed to make this distinction between the special and general application of certain terms and subjects, in the Epistles; to point out the peculiar propriety and particular use of them, as adapted to the circumstances of the early Christians, and to show what is left in them for our instruction and comfort in these later times.

I. The first subject which I shall mention, is the institution of the Lord's Supper. Nothing can be more simple, cheerful and inviting than this institution was, as it originally came from the hands of its Founder; as it was first celebrated, with easy though serious conversation, and in the common manner of a Jewish supper, by our Lord and his Disciples.

Now there is a passage on this subject in an Epistle to the Corinthians, containing a strain of tremendous denunciation which has spread terror through every succeeding age of the church. Many sincere and serious persons even at this day, tremble and hesitate and actually refuse to obey a plain command of the Scriptures, lest they should incur the weight of that fearful curse, and should "eat and drink damnation to themselves." It has actually been supposed by multitudes that they were liable to set the seal to their everlasting perdition, by a serious and conscientious

endeavour to obey the command of God. What deplorable views of God, these imaginations must have nurtured, and how much they must have interfered with the comfort and improvement of Christians, need not be said. It is more to our purpose, to remark, that the difficulty has arisen entirely from neglecting to consider the circumstances. It is true indeed, that there has been a great misunderstanding of the terms of this denunciation; but there has been a still greater inattention to the particular and local application of it. It was aimed against a riotous, licentious and profane use of the Lord's Supper, in which the Corinthians had been guilty of excess and even of intemperance. It belongs therefore, to the Corinthian church, and to no other, until indeed another shall be found which is guilty of the same sacrilege.

Still there is something in this passage for our instruction and admonition. We learn from it, in opposition to what has been commonly supposed, that there is no mysterious and fatal curse, awaiting the abuse of this ordinance in particular; for Paul does not treat the Corinthians as persons who had sealed their own destruction; he does not even so much as cut them off from the communion of the churches, but still calls them Brethren, sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints, and affectionately exhorts them to reform this evil practice. We are admonished, on the other hand, that this feast is not to be regarded as common but as sacred; that the ordinance is solemn, and is to be approached with reverence; and that to violate this as to violate any ordinance of divine worship, involves heinous guilt. At the same time, I think, we may gather from this passage, that the ordinance of the Supper was not looked upon, in early times, with that *peculiar* awe and dread, which

prevails in many minds at this day; for it is incredible that with these views, the Corinthians bad as they were, could ever have fallen into such gross indecorum.

II. The next subject which I shall notice, though very slightly, and chiefly for the sake of illustration, is that of intermarriages between Christians and unbelievers. Such connexions, as you know, were prohibited. Now it only needs to be considered who these unbelievers were, to convince us that such prohibition was extremely reasonable for that time, and also quite peculiar to it. An unbeliever was a Pagan; one of a different and hostile religion; a connexion with whom was likely to prove extremely inconvenient, if not hazardous. Hence the Apostle says, "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers." It would be about as absurd to apply this prohibition literally to our circumstances, as the prohibition under which the ancient Jews were laid, forbidding them to intermarry with the Canaanites. There *are* no unbelievers among us, in the particular sense in which the Apostle used this term. We are far from saying that there is no difference between the good and the bad; or that connexions between such are inexpedient. But to hold the Apostolic prohibition to apply strictly to our times; and then to assume the prerogative to decide infallibly who is a Christian; and to make this abstract inquiry, a previous question in the matter; to undertake this, is incompatible, to say the least, with our knowledge and our circumstances. And yet this is maintained to be right and necessary, by great numbers of Christians of the present age. There may be indeed, a moral maxim gathered from the Apostle's instruction on this subject, which is indeed the maxim of common sense, with regard to the importance of a *similarity* of habits, tastes, &c. And in this limited

application, it may be asked, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

These two instances may serve to illustrate our general principle. And we pass from them to subjects of Christian doctrine and experience.

III. I proceed therefore to remark thirdly, that the terms *faith and justification* had a propriety and a use which has passed away with the age in which they were first adopted. I take these terms together because they are intimately connected. Men were perpetually said to be justified by faith, and this was much insisted on. Before this we hear of justification by humility, as in the case of the publican whose prayer is recorded; of forgiveness which is the same as justification, through the means of forgiving others; of acceptance with God through the means of piety as the condition on our part: but the moment we pass into the Epistles, we find that all this comes by faith. Now, the truth is, that the condition is really not varied. It is essentially the same in both cases. It is that piety or goodness, without which it is impossible to possess, or if possessed, to enjoy the divine favour and approbation. And this condition is constantly represented in the Epistles to be faith; for these reasons—because a new religion was proposed, whose first demand would of course be for faith in it; and because such faith when embraced and avowed in that age of prejudice and persecution, was an unquestionable proof of sincere and pious conviction, and hence naturally came to pass for piety itself.

Much too is said of justification through the free grace of God, because the Apostles had to encounter the pride of philosophers and the self-sufficiency of formalists in religion; because they found every where

prevailing, the notion that rites and sacrifices were entitled to procure the favour of God. Justification therefore, not by sacrifices or by works as properly meritorious, but by grace, by the mercy of God; and justification not by ceremonial observances, but by a living faith and obedience; these were views of religious truth that needed to be particularly urged.

Now it is rather awkward, or at least, it is unfortunate, that these terms should occupy the same place in *our* theology and moral instruction as they did in those of the apostles; because the particular occasion and propriety of them has passed away. We are a nation of believers: I do not say of true Christians, but of believers in the popular sense of that term. There can be no such propriety in urging faith upon us, as upon an assembly of Pagans, and it cannot be urged at all without many explanations; and after all, being liable to be misunderstood. What needs to be pressed upon us now as a prominent point, is a different form of piety. It is not so much faith, as obedience. And as to gratuitous justification, as to free grace, the danger seems now to be, not of trusting to the mercy of God too little but too much; and of making not too much of our own works, but of making far too little.

The attempt to apply the apostolic views of faith and justification in all their extent and frequency to our experience, has been unfortunate also, because it has led to unnatural, mystical ideas of religion, and among other ideas, it has led men to conjure up the preposterous notion that the great obstacle to salvation in the human heart, is not its bad passions, but some strange unwillingness to be saved by the mercy of God; and that faith, being so exclusively and all-important, had some mysterious power of appropriating *and securing* the favour of God to itself. Indeed faith

has been often thought to be nothing else but a willingness to be saved.

On the other hand it is never to be forgotten, that we are saved by grace; and if there is yet among us any lingering thought of deserving heaven by our good deeds, we need to be reminded of the earnestness, with which the apostles taught, that we are saved by grace; by the free grace, the benignity, the forgiving compassion of our Maker. And if any of us are thinking that our claim to the divine favour though not perfect, is yet quite promising; that we have done so little evil and have led a life so moral and unimpeachable, that it would be unjust in God to punish us for our sin, we may rest assured that we know little of ourselves and less still, of that humility, contrition and deep sense of unworthiness that belong to the real Christian.

IV. The remarks which have been made, might be applied to several topics in the Epistles, but we are limited for the present to one further: I mean the subject of *religious experience.* Religious experience in the early age, was itself strongly coloured by circumstances and the description of it still more.

It is to be considered in the first place, that the circumstances of that age gave to religion a character of powerful excitement. We are to remember that it was the age of miracles, of signs and wonders; that it was the era of a new and wonderful revelation; that it was the epoch of a new religious dominion; and that men's minds were strongly excited by what was novel, marvellous and prospective around them. We are to remember that the new religion, aroused them from a guilty and degraded idolatry and naturally filled them with amazement and alarm.

Again, it is to be considered that the circumstances

of that age made religion, if I may speak so, a more notable thing; a thing more easily marked by dates, more easily referred to a certain period of time. Conversion in that day, consisted of two parts. It was a turning from Paganism to Christianity; and it was a turning from sin to holiness. Conversion therefore was both an event and an experience; not an experience only as it now is, but an event; a thing that could be dated from a certain day and hour. We are to remember then, that conversion was not a change of affections only but of the whole religion; a change of rites, of customs, of the whole course of life; that it was a change of hopes too; that it introduced men into a new world, a world of new and bright and astonishing revelations: that for this reason a new phraseology became applicable to them, not to their character entirely but in part to their circumstances; that they became at once, externally rather than internally, new creatures; that old things passed away and all things became new; that they were brought out of darkness into marvellous light. We see in all this, I say, the colouring of circumstances. These men were not at once made perfect and fit for heaven; as the language would seem to represent; for they were urged to make their calling and election sure. The language describes an inward change indeed; but it also describes a ceremonial change. If the change had been *altogether* spiritual, we doubtless should have had a simpler and more accurate phraseology on the subject. We know indeed that an instantaneous and total change, of all the habits, thoughts, feelings and purposes of the soul, is incompatible with the nature of the mind and with all proper moral influence upon it.

It can require but a little reflection to convince you

of all this. You must have observed, also, what injury the literal application of this language to religious experience in later days, has produced, by awakening noisy excitement an abundant joys and rash confidence, and on the whole, an artificial and extravagant experience, at a moment when simplicity and modesty and anxiety and watchfulness were of all things the most suitable and desirable. And you must have reflected, how much better and fitter it would have been, in that moment of imaginary or real conversion, for the subject of it, instead of coming forth to the multitude to tell what the Lord had done for his soul, to have gone away to his retired closet to pray, and to carry on the secret struggle of the religious life in his own bosom; how much better for him who thinks himself to have been a Christian but for one hour or for one day, in that day, in that hour, to be silent, thoughtful, diffident, anxious!

But there is danger and great danger, on the other hand. Perceiving that the apostolic language had a special application to former times, we may imagine that it has little or no relation to us. The colouring of circumstance, which is spread over their phraseology, may hide from us its deep and serious meaning. We may imagine that the doctrine of conversion is but an antiquated notion, with which we have little or no concern. We may look upon it as the costume of religious experience in an ancient age, which is now quite laid aside. Yet how strange would it be to suppose a costume which clothed nothing, or a body of phraseology, if I may speak so, without a living spirit! And how low must be our conceptions of Jesus and his apostles, of the most spiritual teachers the world ever saw, if we imagine their ultimate object to have been, to bring about a formal change of religion, a

mere change of rites and names!—Their doctrine, may it never be forgotten! pointed chiefly to the heart; and we all have a concern with it more weighty and solemn than any circumstances can impose. If, my friends, if we are Christians only in name, if we hope for heaven only because we were born in a Christian land, we still need a conversion. If we are worldly; if we are covetous or sensual; if we are guided by inclination rather than by duty, we need a conversion; not less than that which the Pagan experienced. If we are unkind, severe, censorious or injurious, in the relations or the intercourse of life; if we are unfaithful parents or undutiful children; if we are severe masters or faithless servants; if we are treacherous friends or bad neighbours or bitter competitors, we need a conversion; we need a change, greater than merely from Paganism to Christianity. If in fine we have never yet formed the resolute and serious purpose of leading a religious life; if we do not love the duties of piety; if we have not yet learnt the fear of God nor cherished the spirit of prayer, we need a conversion. We need to be anxious: we need to fear. We need to strive to enter in at the straight gate.

Religion is as full of absorbing interest now as it ever was. And if we ever enter this way of life, though our access to it will hardly be joyful and triumphant, if we are wise; yet there will be—let us not take the part of the cold hearted scoffer! there will be joys, abundant joys in its progress; and there will be triumph, glorious triumph in its close. But first, there will be as of old, many an anxious struggle, many a serious meditation, many an earnest prayer: there will be, there must be watchings and fears, there must be striving and hope; and then will come the triumph. Yes, Christian! there will be triumph, glorious triumph:

when you can say, with the fervent apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will give me at that day."

II.

To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.—1. Cor. ix. 22.

THE use which has been made of this passage will be recollected. It manifestly supports the principle that Paul's instructions were modified by the circumstances in which they were given. We are therefore led to conclude that there was something, in the manner and form of the apostolic instructions peculiar to the early age; while at the same time, there is a spirit in them that belongs to all ages.

V. We have attempted in some particulars, to make this distinction between the local and the general application of them, and proceed directly to notice as a fifth instance of this distinction, *the manner in which our Saviour is spoken of* in the New Testament. Now there are two circumstances which affected this manner.

The first indeed was not entirely peculiar to that age, but it deserves to be mentioned as stamping a peculiarity upon the language of the apostles concerning Jesus Christ. It was common to call a system in religion or philosophy familiarly by the name of its founder; so that the name of the founder, became a kind of appellative for the system. Thus Plato, was the familiar name for the doctrine or philosophy of Plato. Thus Christians were said to be in Christ, to be baptised into him, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ; *these phrases* meaning of course the principles and

doctrines of his religion. Now this was the custom of the age, the style of writing and speaking; it was form; it was phraseology; and we are perfectly at liberty to lay it aside when it is no longer consonant with our general habits of speaking; and when we look less with admiration upon Jesus Christ, as the founder of a new system, than with veneration, as the Saviour of men. And yet this sort of phraseology is with some the test of evangelical preaching; and though you speak never so clearly and fervently of the great principles of Christianity, it will be said, and perhaps contemptuously said, that "there is nothing of Christ in it."

But there is another circumstance to be mentioned. It is this: that the apostles spoke of Jesus as eye-witnesses; as those who had seen him in his teachings, in his sufferings; who had been with him and lived with him; and who would naturally speak of him with the warmth of a personal interest and friendship. These remarks apply to Paul also, for there was doubtless a mutual sympathy among the early disciples, in these feelings; there was a spirit of the age. Perhaps it is in imitation of this, without the same circumstances to justify it, that there is sometimes witnessed an irreverent and almost shocking familiarity with the name of Jesus: and a neglect to consider the circumstances, together with doctrinal errors, has led others, perhaps, to speak of Jesus Christ with an affection, trust and delight, far beyond what they ever ascribe to God the Father. So that a writer justly remarks, that a discourse on the goodness of God, shall pass for something very flat, cold and common-place; while a discourse on the compassion of Christ to sinners, shall be looked upon as containing the very marrow and essence of the gospel.

There certainly have been in the world, and are, very singular and superstitious feelings concerning Jesus Christ; there is a peculiarity in men's regard towards him, of which I do not remember to have seen any explanation attempted. Nothing has been so sacred in religion as the name of Christ: nothing deemed so awful as to profane it; not even to profane the name of God himself. Nothing has so tasked and awed and overwhelmed the minds of men, as inquiries into his nature and offices. Of the dread attributes of God, of the momentous concerns of human duty, they could freely reason and speculate. Concerning these subjects it has not been thought rash to inquire. Nay, it has been judged lawful and wise, not only to examine our early impressions but to modify, to change, to improve them. Indeed, every thing else in religion is open to our scrutiny. But the moment any one undertakes to scrutinize the character and offices of our Saviour, he is assailed with voices of warning. If he dares to doubt, he is given up for lost. It would seem as if there was some peculiar and superstitious fear of doing wrong or offence to Christ, a scrupulous care on this point, a punctiliousness of devotion to him; such as the idolater pays to the deity he most fears, or to the symbol he most reverences. Or, on the other hand, the same general state of mind takes the form of a fond and sentimental attachment, expressed by the most odious and offensive freedoms of speech. And many really imagine that while with a kind of sympathetic fervour they are embracing the being of their impassioned imagination and are calling him "dear Saviour," and "precious Christ," and "lovely Jesus," they are entering into the very heart and life of religion.

Without undertaking fully to account for this

extravagant state of mind, which would lead us too far from our object, we may remark in passing that it has probably, in part, grown out of a mistaken and improper attempt to adopt entirely the language and feeling of the early disciples. The imitation has indeed, as usual, gone far beyond the original. For never did the apostles inculcate any such superstitious emotion of fear, or give license to any such sickening fondness of language concerning Christ, as has been witnessed in latter days.

Far different from this, far more rational, far more reverential, far more profound and earnest too, is the gratitude and admiration which we are bound to entertain for the greatest moral Benefactor of men. The ages that have intervened between us and his actual residence on earth, have only accumulated evidences and illustrations of the value and grandeur of his work. Be it so that his teaching, his doctrine, his system of religion, is often figuratively called by his name; yet it is none the less true that he is a real person. And however much cause his immediate disciples had to revere and love him, we have none the less. And although our attachment to him must be less personal than theirs, although it must partake less of the character of an intimate friendship; yet it may be, if possible, even more reverential, more intellectual, more expanded. I know not what enthusiasm for excellence is; I know not what veneration for goodness and gratitude for kindness are, if these sentiments do not peculiarly belong to the Author and Finisher of our blessed faith. Let me hear no more of admiration, of love and joy, if he who has taught me peace of mind and true wisdom, who has brought me nigh to God and opened for me the path to immortality, if *he* shall not be admired and loved, and hailed with raptures of

joy. This is no fanatical nor superstitious emotion, but it is the natural, the true and sober homage of human feeling, to transcendent worth and loveliness of character, and to unspeakable goodness; goodness not common and earthly, but spiritual, disinterested, divine; witnessed by toils and sufferings, and sealed in death.

What though the time of our Saviour's visible manifestation has passed away; what though the footsteps of the Benefactor and the Sufferer no longer tread the earth, and his voice no longer speaks to the weary and heavy-laden; what though the tears of Gethsemane no longer call for mortal sympathies, and the dark scene of Calvary has passed away from the awful mount, and all the wonderful memorial of what he was, is no longer told by living and admiring witnesses; yet all this was but the preparation for his reign, but the passage to his throne in the lasting admiration and affection of men. If it is much to us that he once lived among men, is it not more that he now liveth at the right hand of God? If it interests us to go back to the scene of his teaching and suffering, and his dying hour, does it not still more interest us that we may hereafter behold the same teacher, the same sufferer, him who was dead and is alive again, and liveth forevermore? Do we not feel that in the coming world we have a forerunner, and that we are going to the dwelling-place of a friend, to mansions that he hath gone to prepare for us? Is there any thing extravagant or enthusiastic in the expectation, that we shall know *him* whom we call our Saviour, in some new manner and degree, that we shall learn more and more of the loveliness of his character and shall hold with him a sacred communion, a sublime friendship, *forever*? I think not:—if the probabilities which reason

offers, if the revelations which the Scriptures unfold, may be listened to. In all this I persuade myself that I entertain no superstitious ideas of our Saviour. I regard him as I would regard any other benefactor; only that he is the most exalted of all. For all the blessings of this life, are to me inconsiderable compared with what he has taught in his doctrine with what he has procured by his death, and consummated in his rising from the tomb.

VI. I shall now introduce as a sixth and final topic of illustration, the manner in which *the relation of Christians to one another, and to the world*, is spoken of.

And in the first place, the relation of Christians to one another. The ancient fellowship of Christians, was something considerably different from what the present institutions and modes of society permit. They were a persecuted and proscribed class of men. Almost the whole world was united against them. Danger and death waited for them every where. These circumstances produced a peculiar union and familiarity among them. Their exposure was common, and they were endeared to one another: it was imminent, and they forgot in a measure, the ordinary distinctions of social life. It was no time to stand upon etiquette and form. The weakest member of their society rose into importance, when he might preserve the life of the most powerful, or be called on to give up his own life for the common cause. Hence the apostles exhort them, with peculiar emphasis, to mutual confidence, intercourse, counsel and aid, and even to mutual advice and exhortation.

It does not follow that it is now expedient to break down all the barriers of distinction in society. It does not follow that it is now the duty of all Christians to

mingle together in the intimate intercourse of life. The proper *order* of life, the different modes of living, different tastes and habits, different degrees of knowledge and refinement, forbid it.

Let Christians learn to love one another: this is all that they can now do; and this is enough. Let those who come to the same sanctuary, who worship at the same altar, feel that respect and kindness for each other, which their common relation and common approach to the same God, should inspire. We wish indeed that more of the *spirit* of the ancient fellowship was among us; that there was more tenderness for each other's faults, more zeal and solicitude for each other's spiritual improvement and comfort, more mutual intercession at the common throne of grace. It is lamentable indeed, that the outward forms of society so much divide us, while the inward spirit so little unites us. We need to be often reminded that the external distinctions of life are vain and perishing, and that another order of greatness and honour will obtain in the world to which we are going. Let us oftener carry ourselves forward beyond this state of imperfect allotments, let us pass beyond these bounds of our earthly vision, and remember that he whom we scarcely know or notice here, may be greater and more beloved than we in that more exalted state, may be the greatest in the kingdom of God. Let us then free our minds from those low and worldly ways of thinking which too much prevail, concerning poverty and toil and the humble lot. It may be the best and the safest of all conditions. It may be only the greater trial, for the greater reward. It may be, as we often see it in this life, the retirement and obscurity that is to open to the most splendid distinction and glory; a temporary darkness that is to give place to the brightest day.

Again; it is to be remarked, that the description of those who were called from the world into the Christian church, is not in all respects applicable to the present time. We are told that "Not many noble, not many mighty, not many wise, were called," but that the poor of this world were made rich in faith, and the ignorant were made wise unto salvation. If you look at the state of things in that day, you will see a special reason for all this. The profession of Christianity was disgraceful. To take the name of Christian was to take the name of infamy. The chief Apostle tells us that he and his companions were accounted the off-scouring of the world. Now the persons who would be most susceptible of the fear of disgrace, were the great, the noble; men who were in high and conspicuous stations, who had a character at stake, and who lived in a state of society too, where honour was even more regarded than it is now. Not so the poor, the ignorant, the unknown, who were already degraded and trampled on by their superiors, and who had no honour to lose.

Besides; those who bore rule often considered themselves as pledged by their office, to persecute Christianity. They regarded it as the rival of their religion and the enemy of their power. How then could many such be expected to embrace it!

And with regard to the wise of that day, let it be considered what sort of wise persons they were: wise in sophistry, wise in the subtleties of Grecian speculation and the jargon of the Oriental philosophy, wise in their own conceit, and looking down with ineffable contempt on the vulgar. Would these men condescend to be taught by a few fishermen from Galilee? Would they hear of a teacher from the despised land of Judea?

But things are now changed. The intelligent among us are not like the sages of those days. Learning is more allied to common sense and has taken the garb of modesty. The powerful and great among us, have not the same reasons for rejecting Christianity. The profession of it is respectable. It is the religion of the land. And we can point to many great and mighty and wise, who profess and adorn it. And on the whole, in a general and fair estimate, there is probably more virtue, more regard to the Christian religion, among the higher than among the lower classes of our communities.

It is altogether unwarrantable therefore, to apply the ancient comparison to the present state of things. Yet there are not wanting examples of such a comparison. If for instance, one form of Christianity attracts the more intelligent, opulent and respectable classes of society; if there is a progress, an improvement in the views of religion, which generally, we do not say universally, draws the respect and attention of more improved minds, and if the opposer of these views is annoyed by the reflection and mortified by the comparison; "Ah! my brethren, he says, ye know how it is written, that not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called but the foolish things and the weak things and the base things, and things that are depised, hath God chosen." Now I shall seriously and boldly say, that he *ought* to know *better* than to make such an application of Scripture. By this rule of judging, he might level and degrade all that is dignified and respectable in society!

The higher and the more prosperous classes of the community undoubtedly, have their dangers and faults. These we shall be led to notice however, under the

remaining topic of this general head; viz. the relation of the Christian church to the world.

Here too it may be easily shown, I think, that the language of the Epistles needs to be qualified in its application to us; the language, I say, which describes the relation of the Christian church to the world. It was said of Christians, that they had not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; and they were commanded not to be conformed to the world. They were directed to come out from the surrounding world, and to be separate, and not to touch the unclean thing. Now this language is understood by many, as literally applicable to our present circumstances, though our circumstances are immensely different from those of the early Christians. And it may well be feared, that the habit of applying the Apostolic representations of the Heathen world, to the world around us, and of making the same distinction between the church and the world that then existed, has awakened in some Christians an unamiable pride and vanity, has helped to give them a stiffness and repulsiveness of manners towards others, and has made them less friendly, kind and social in their intercourse with men, generally, than they otherwise would have been. He who takes up the notion that all around him, excepting the few who belong to the church, are at heart enemies to him on account of his religion, and deserve the characteristics and the appellations that the Apostles anciently gave to the Pagan world, and that to himself also belong, on account of his moral superiority, all distinctive titles of dignity and excellence, which were applied in part to the circumstances of the early Christians; he who holds these views, I say, cannot fail to have his amiableness and modesty affected by them. He may think that all men are his enemies

and he may treat them as if they were so; and when they testify, as they well may, their displeasure or their ridicule, at his forbidding and sanctimonious deportment, he may think himself persecuted for righteousness' sake, but he is greatly mistaken!

The truth is, there *is* no such distinction between the church and the world, as there was in the early age. There is no such distinction of character, as the language in question describes: and it never was designed solely to describe a distinction of character, but in part a difference of circumstances, a difference of religion, of privileges, of knowledge, of moral advantages. Recollect that the worst churches, that the Corinthian church, amidst all its shameful disputes, its more shameful vices, and its awful profanation of the Lord's Supper, still enjoyed all these high and distinctive titles of superiority; and you must conclude that these distinctions were in part ascribed to their outward state. Recollect that the Jews, in the worst periods of their history, were still "a chosen people, a holy nation," and you will have an exemplification of the same thing.

The world in the times of the apostles, was a Pagan world, and was emphatically hostile to the Christian church. The two were widely and visibly distinguished. It is true indeed, that there is, and ever was, a wide distinction between good and bad men. And it will be admitted by us all, I presume, that there is, at this day, more of a serious purpose and endeavour to lead a pious life, more reading and studying of the Scriptures, more prayer and persevering virtue, within the church than without it. And much were it to be wished that it *were*, indeed, more distinguished from the spirit of the world, than any language can describe. But as the case really and unfortunately is; to draw

a line of distinction, and to say, that on the one side, is all the goodness and piety in the world, and on the other none at all; this is more than modesty would claim on one part, and more than justice ought to admit on the other. And yet, all the outcry there is about confounding the church and the world, is supported by the notion of such a distinction; is supported, by the particular and local and circumstantial representations that belonged to the apostolic age.

But still we must contend that there is a world to be feared; or to speak more accurately there is a spirit of the world which is to be feared; and the more so, just in proportion as it is less suspected. We are not required to withdraw from the general intercourse of society, as the early Christians were; we have to do what is far harder; to live *in* the world, and yet to withstand the spirit of the world. When the Christian band was small and persecuted, and hemmed in by a surrounding and hostile community, it was not so difficult to preserve its unity and good fellowship and consistency of character. Then there was a visible and formal separation. On one side there was open hostility; on the other, unqualified jealousy and dread.

Now what we have to fear in the world is no longer visible. It is a foe in ambush. It is the spirit of the world. It is an influence, secret, subtle, insinuating, which leads us captive before we are aware, and which leads us, not to martyrdom but, to compliance. Alas! (we had almost said,) it does not bear our souls on the mounting flame to heaven, but it chains and fastens them down to the earth. There is such a spirit, though we may see it not, that is more to be dreaded than the arm of persecution. There is a spirit of business, absorbing, eager, over-reaching; ungenerous and hard in its dealings, keen and bitter in its compe-

titions, low and earthly in its purposes: there is a spirit of fashion, vain, trifling, thoughtless, fond of display, dissipating the mind, wasting the time, and giving its chief stimulus and its main direction to the life; there is a spirit of ambition, selfish, mercenary, restless, circumventing, living but in the opinion of others, envious of others good fortune, or miserably vain of its own success; there *is* a spirit, in the world of business, in the world of amusement, in the world of ambition, which is to be dreaded. Even in our best employments, there is something to fear. There is a spirit of reading merely for gratification; or of writing, for credit; of going to church for entertainment; of praying with formality; and of preaching, shall I say it? of preaching with selfish aims, which is to be dreaded, and in the latter case, to be abhorred. Ah! my friends, it is a dangerous world that we live in. The best, the wisest, the purest have found it to be so. To fall into the wide-sweeping current of its influence and to be borne along with it, may be easy, may be pleasant, but *it is not safe.* There is, if I may specify once more, there is a spirit, which is of the world, a spirit whose low habits belong to this world, rather than to any expectation of a better, whose fears and hopes and anxieties are all limited to these earthly scenes, which is grasping for an earthly treasure and forgets the heavenly; there is a mind, that is fascinated and engrossed by things seen and temporal, and indifferent to things unseen and eternal; there is a prevailing forgetfulness of God, there is an insensibility to the worth of the soul, to its necessities and dangers, to the need of prayer and effort to guard it in temptations and to guide it in its solemn probation for the future; in one word, there is a pervading spirit of religious indifference, which is to be dreaded.

In the external habits and actions of life, as has been already said, we cannot be greatly distinguished; but there is a harder distinction to attain; it is in the internal habits of the mind. In this respect it is, that we are still commanded to come out and be separate. In this respect it is not safe for us to live as the world lives. Nor is it safe for us to live carelessly in the world. Not only is the moral atmosphere around us infected, but we breathe it, we live in it, and it presses us on every side. In these circumstances. every solemn admonition of the Scripture, relating to the world, may, in the spirit of it, be properly applied to us at this day. In these circumstances, we need, as men ever have needed and ever will need, a faith that overcomes the world.

On the whole, let us remember, that although the circumstances of the early revelation have passed away, the religion itself, has, if I may speak so, an everlasting freshness and novelty. There was something in the instructions of the apostles that was appropriate to their age; but all that is essential and spiritual remain for us. There is a broad basis of moral truth; there is an everlasting foundation, on which the men of all ages may stand. Though the form of its superstructure shows the architecture of the age, though some of its former appendages on which Christians gazed with admiration, have fallen off, though the burnished dome no longer kindles in the first splendours of the morning, yet the mighty temple of its worship is still open for us to enter, and to offer the lowly homage of our devotion.

In fine, though the form and the costume and the aspects of circumstance have fallen off, with the signs and wonders of the early age, religion is but presented to us, in a more sublime and spiritual character. And

our progress in this religion will be marked by a closer adherence and a more exclusive regard to the spirit and essence of it, and a less concern about particular modes of phraseology and the particular forms of its exhibition. We shall pass through the intervening vails, which different dispensations and different ages, which systematic speculations and sectarian prejudices have thrown around it, and shall approach the great reality. We shall pass through the rent vail of the temple, and enter "the holy of holies." We shall thus make our progress in knowledge and devotion, a suitable preparation for a state of being more spiritual and sublime; where infirmity shall no longer need forms to support it; nor inquiry guards to preserve it; where different systems and dispensations shall no more mislead, nor prejudice, nor divide us; but there shall be one eternal conviction, that of the truth: and one eternal dispensation, the dispensation of the spirit.

ON MIRACLES,

PRELIMINARY TO THE ARGUMENT FOR A REVELATION

BEING THE DUDLEIAN LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE HARVARD UNIVERSITY, MAY, 1836.

And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?—Mark iv. 40, 41.

THE power of Jesus on the occasion here referred to, was undoubtedly miraculous. Without dwelling on the circumstances, which are familiar to you, I wish to call your attention to two points in the narrative, as fairly presenting the subject of my present discourse. One is the natural astonishment of the disciples, amounting almost to a reluctance to believe what their eyes beheld. "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" The other point, to which I wish to draw your attention, is the language of rebuke with which our Saviour addresses this feeling of incredulity. "How is it that ye have no faith?" And I may add that he frequently reproaches, in similar terms, the want of faith in his miraculous powers.

Now it is this presumption against miracles; in other words, it is the preliminary ground of the argument for Christianity, that I propose in this discourse to examine. And of such importance do I hold this preliminary view of the subject, that I think it will make all the difference, with many minds, between believing in Christianity, and not believing. That is to say, the evidences

of revelation are strong enough to produce belief, if it were not for this presumption against them. Let there be no prejudice against miracles; let it appear, in any man's account, perfectly reasonable and philosophical to admit them; let him regard it as extremely probable that the Supreme Being would interpose for our spiritual relief; and then I say, that he must feel the evidence, actually offered, to be ample and overwhelming. It is not from the weakness of the proof, but from the strength of the presumption against it, that it fails of producing conviction.

That there is this presumption against miracles, I hardly need say. It appears in many forms. There has always been a prejudice of this nature lurking in the bosom of science. The doctrine of philosophical necessity seems to me to proceed from the same source, though I am aware that its advocates do not deny the Christian attestation to those facts which we denominate miraculous. The modern system of German Rationalism is a standing and recorded proof of the same presumption against miracles. Nay, with some writers this presumption has amounted to an assertion of the essential incredibility of such facts.* And where

* The essentialin credibility of miracles, the impossibility indeed of such occurrences, has lately been argued by an English writer, the author of "Essays on the Pursuit of Truth," in the Third Essay. It is the old argument of Mr. Hume; but it is presented with great clearness, in a manner at once very calm and imposing, and without any of those terms that would indicate its purpose, or any consideration of the answers that have been, and may be given to it.

The course of the author's argument is as follows. In the first place, he maintains that all reasoning, belief and knowledge depend on the uniformity of causation; in other words, upon the regular succession of antecedents and consequents. That most of them do, is doubtless true. We could not anticipate the future nor interpret the past, but upon the supposition that the same principles have been, and will be in operation, that are now. But whether there is

it falls short of this, it is still a secret reluctance to receive them. And I think this reluctance has some unusual developement among many reflecting persons

no other basis or source of belief, is the question. Most philosophers have persuaded themselves that the world had a beginning,—an event which quite breaks in upon their order of sequences.

In the next place, the author maintains that our belief in the uniformity of causation is instinctive, original, ultimate, and irresistible in the mind. That a general sense of preference of order is so, I believe; and that experience working upon this, or without it, must create a very strong conviction of the regularity of nature, is obvious; but whether any thing more than this is true, I must doubt.

But I am willing to give the argument the benefit, on both points, of any doubts that do not involve a begging of the question, and come at once to the conclusion. The question, then, of miracles is brought to the point of conflicting testimonies. Nature, on the one hand, testifies, it is said, to undeviating regularity. Change, then, is impossible. Man's testimony, too, is valuable, and has its regularity as truly as nature; but it is more liable to be mistaken, or we are more liable to mistake its marks, and therefore it can never counterbalance the testimony of nature. Therefore a miracle is impossible; and the belief in it, absurd.

This argument proves too much. For suppose now that I acquiesce in the conclusion, and quietly take my seat in this pinfold of philosophy, what does this argument suppose me to say? Or what does the skeptic say, who strives to lift his head high enough (but cannot) above the machinery of causes, to declare their laws, and processes, and bounds?

In the first place, he says that God Almighty either *cannot* change the course of things, though he should please to do it, or else that He *will not* please to do it. For the reader will observe, that such a change is pronounced, without qualification, impossible! To know so much of the Omniscient purpose,—to know so little of the Omnipotent power,—presents a solecism in which it is difficult to tell whether the ignorance or the presumption is the most extraordinary.

In the second place, this argument would prove that the world and the universe are eternal. They could never have begun, they can never cease to exist; for either fact would be a deviation from the uniformity of causation. In the one case, there would be a consequent without any regular antecedent. In the other, an antecedent without any regular consequent. Nay, since the author holds

in this country, at the present moment. It is seen in the disposition of many to turn from the miracles to what they call the internal evidence. It is not uncommon in society to hear the miracles spoken of slightly. There is in every age, a fashion of thinking; and the fashion of thinking at the present day, I conceive, is growing more and more adverse to these primitive, peculiar, and hitherto received evidences of revelation. It seems to be thought by some, that the day has gone by for talking about miracles; that they answered a purpose indeed in the primitive age, but have no longer any use. Not a few are saying, "Our feelings convince

that there is the same unchangeable order of sequences in the intellectual as in the physical world, the race of men can have, in this theory, neither beginning nor end. In short, this assumption seems to me to be compatible with nothing but Atheism. If there be no Power superior to nature, none that can interfere with its processes, then perhaps it is fair to infer that its processes must go on unchanged and unchangeable. But if there is a God, the *possibility* of change is equal to his *power;* it is unbounded and unquestionable.

In the third place, the argument proves too much, because it goes beyond all reasonable and known bounds of skepticism. The author who says to his fellow-men, "You cannot justly believe in a miracle; the thing is impossible, and faith is impossible," transcends the bounds of all human experience, if not of all human patience. Because almost all men, who have ever lived, *have* believed in miracles. And is not the very question before us, in fact, a question about experience? Could all men have believed in miracles, if, as our author contends, an original and fundamental law of the mind forbade their believing in them? Is it not as unphilosophical, as it is intolerable, to say that all mankind have been found believing in a thing which is plainly impossible? What is meant by its being impossible? That God cannot perform it? I will not impute to any one the intentional blasphemy of such an averment. Is it meant, then, that it is impossible that we should believe it? But we do believe it. We can believe it. All men do and can; all but the few, the very few who agree with our author. Is there any *remaining* idea, then, that can be attached to the word *impossible*? I know of none.

us, that Christianity is true; the book convinces us that it is true; and we want no other evidence." It was in this feeling, obviously, that Coleridge exclaimed, "Evidences of Christianity! I am weary of the word. Make a man feel the want of it; rouse him, if you can, to the self-knowledge of his need of it; and you may safely trust it to its own evidence."*

That this way of thinking is unphilosophical, that it does not properly perceive the very ground on which it professes to stand, that the reluctance to receive miracles, though natural and reasonable, to a certain extent, is unphilosophical when it amounts to a strong prejudice or presumption against them; nay more, that on a whole view of the case, the presumption ought, in fact, to be *the other way*, is what I shall now attempt to show.

But as this way of thinking arises in part, I believe, from a misconception of the place which miracles properly hold in the Christian system, let me employ a word or two of explanation on this point. A man says, that he cannot regard miracles as the great things in Christianity, since he assigns that place to its doctrines, and precepts and spirit. Neither do we ask him to regard miracles as the great things. It has been well said of the miracles, that "they are like the massive subterranean arches and columns of a huge building. It is not on their account that we prize the building, but the building for its own sake. We do not think of the foundation nor care about it, other than to know that it has one. We dwell above in the upper and fairer halls. The crowds go in and out, and rejoice in their comforts and splendours, without ever casting a thought on that upon which the whole so peacefully

* Aids to Reflection, p. 245, Amer. ed.

and securely reposes. Such are the miracles to the gospel. They support the edifice, and upon a divine foundation. They show us, that if the superstructure is fair and beautiful to dwell in, and if its towers and endless flights of steps *appear* to reach even up to heaven, it is all just what it seems to be; for it rests upon the broad foundation of the Rock of Ages.*

This observation will apply, perhaps, to the case of those who say, that they do not feel the miracles to be necessary to their faith in Christianity. When they say this, they must mean by faith, that moral apprehension of the spirit and power of Christianity, that sense of the spiritual relief and comfort that it brings, which does not, it is true, depend on miracles; in other words, that view of the superstructure which does not, it is true, immediately depend on any view of a foundation. But this view presupposes a speculative or traditional belief in the Christian Religion; or, if it does not, then it is just like a faith in any other good writings; that is, simply a belief that they are good and wise, and therefore true; and if true, accordant with the will of God. In this sense, we have faith in all the dictates of reason. But Christianity we receive as a special revelation, an authoritative record of God's will; and in this character it must have some attestation beyond its general consonance with our rational or moral nature; else every demonstration in the mathematics, and every undisputed principle in moral philosophy, would be a revelation. That attestation, I say, is miracle.

The state of opinion on this subject makes it necessary, perhaps, before proceeding farther, that I should

* Rev William Ware.

define the word *miracle*. All Christians of whom I know any thing, in this country, hold to miracles in some sense. I wish distinctly to say this; because if the sense which I affix to this word, as the only one satisfactory to myself, is not received by others, I would by no means leave it to be inferred, that there is any professed difference of opinion between us as to the miraculous origin of Christianity. There is only a friendly question between us about the meaning which ought to be assigned to this word.

What then is a miracle? I answer, It is an interruption or ceasing of the regular and established succession of events, taking place in connexion with the mission of a person professing to be sent from God, and designed to give that proof of his mission. I say, an interruption or ceasing of the regular and established succession of events, and that for a specific purpose. A miracle is a fact, like to which nothing ever has occurred, or ever will occur but for the same purpose. I lay stress upon its being a simple fact. In regard to the succession of events, I say nothing of causation or necessity, of which we know nothing. I do not conceive that one event compels another, as the cogs of one wheel push on another wheel. I take the bare facts. Since the world began it was not known that a blind man received sight at a word, or that a man with a broken limb, or that a dead body, already in the first stages of putrefaction, instantly and at a word, recovered vigour and activity. Such events, we say, on certain occasions, and for certain purposes, without precedent, without parallel, have taken place. They are the miracles.

Now the question is, What is the fair and philosophical description of these events? On this point there is a strong reluctance in many minds to admit

that there was any thing, in these cases, out of the course of nature or contrary to it; any interruption of the order of nature or suspension of its processes, or departure from its regularity. They say, that there may have been causes in nature or in the mind, which, though unknown to us, are sufficient to account for the results in question. I object to the word "causes," as implying an efficient power in one event to produce another, of which we know nothing. And therefore I consider the word "interposition," though proper enough to be used in popular discourse, to be strictly speaking unphilosophical, since it implies that one event *has* an inherent power to produce another, and conveys the impression of a hand thrust in to stay the event that would otherwise take place. This may be true, but we do not know it. We come then to the bare facts. And, if we deal with facts alone, I see not how it can be denied that a miracle is something out of the course of nature, and contrary to it; an interruption of its order, a suspension of its processes. On this point, a distinction is sometimes made between a real interruption and an apparent interruption; and it is contended that the interruption is only apparent. But in speaking of facts, submitted to the observation of our senses, it appears to me, that we must conceive of real and apparent as the same thing. That is to say, if such a fact or such an event, as one of the Christian miracles, never appeared before, and never shall appear again but at the intervention of some divinely commissioned agent, then it is a real departure from the order of nature,—that is, from the universally received and known order of events, which is all that we know of the order of nature. In other words, the whole thing is a peculiarity; a special conjunction of events for a particular purpose. And, for myself, I certainly feel

none of this strong repugnance to the idea of an interrupted succession of events. I have no respect for the mechanical order of nature, that makes me feel as if it could not be changed. I do not see that the moral purpose of that order is at all impaired by occasional departures from it. Surely, the Almighty Will is not bound in the chains of fate, or of nature, or by the powers of nature. I am unable to see, why the Infinite Parent may not change the course of his providence for the benefit of his children, as well as a human parent may change the course of his administration for a similar purpose. Not, indeed, that it would be an unforeseen expedient with the Omniscient Ruler; but I cannot see that its being foreseen alters at all the state of the facts.

But now let us grant for the sake of the argument, that the miracles are, as the modern interpreter proposes to consider them, only seeming miracles; only apparent, not real interruptions of the order of nature. Would they then be valid evidence of revelation? When Jesus says, "Peace, be still," the winds and waves sink to an instant calm. It was wonderful; it appeared miraculous; but it was miraculous, say some, only to the ignorance or misapprehension of the observers. There was a sudden lulling of the winds and waves, which to the disciples, seemed miraculous. Or there were causes in the bosom of those turbulent elements, however hidden from us, which produced that sudden calm; and such occurrences may yet come to be as well known, if not as familiar, as any of the phenomena of nature. But then, I ask, would there be any evidence of a special divine commission? To illustrate the case, let us make a supposition; or let us take a piece of real history. Soon after the arrival of Columbus on the shore of the New World, there was

an eclipse of the sun. The rude inhabitants had never, perhaps, remarked such an event before. Columbus, for a certain purpose, informs them that the sun will be darkened, and he predicts the precise day, and hour, and moment, when it will happen. The people hold their minds in suspense till the hour arrives, and then, witnessing the result, they come to the conclusion that Columbus is a supernatural being, and they reverence him as such. It was to them a miracle But, in after times, suppose that this people, or their descendants, should study astronomy. What *then* would be their conclusion? Would they not say, "We were deceived?" And what other than this could be the conclusion, if it should at length be discovered, that the miracles of Jesus belonged to the natural, though at that time unknown, order of events.

But let us see now, if miracles, in the sense which I contend for, do not inevitably belong to the Christian system. Is it possible that those who originally witnessed them could have received them in any other light? "We never saw it on this wise; since the world began, such things were never seen," is their language. If all this belonged to the order of nature, must they not have been grossly deceived; and deceived too, with the knowledge, if not intention, of the first teachers of Christianity?

But further; is there any one branch of the Christian evidences that does not involve miracles of the character contended for? Does not the argument from prophecy, and does not the argument from the early spread of Christianity, clearly proceed on this ground? In the one case, more than the natural prescience of any human mind is supposed; in the other, more than any known powers of persuasion. Nay, do not the very attempts to explain away miracles still leave

unexplained miracles, unexplained departures from the order of nature? It is said for instance, in regard to the cases of the sick healed, and the dead raised to life, that we cannot aver that the powers of nature were suspended or modified, because we are not acquainted with all the powers of nature; because there may have been a secret power in the sick or the dead body suddenly to restore it to health or life. But, granting this, still the knowledge of the exact *time* when that event was to happen must have been miraculous. Let us take, for example, the miracle recorded in our text. Our Saviour arose and rebuked the wind and the sea, and there was a great calm. Will it be pretended by any *honest* believer in Christianity, that Jesus acted upon a very sagacious judgment with regard to the signs of the weather? Surely not. The only tolerable supposition of him who receives Christianity, but rejects the miracles, is that there were powers in nature, though beyond human penetration, which produced that sudden calm. But then, it is necessary, I repeat, to suppose a *miraculous knowledge* in him, who discerned either that power, or the moment of its operation. Or, if any one should say that there are powers in the *mind*, with which we are unacquainted, and if he should maintain a natural, moral connexion between the mind of him who spake and that sinking of the winds and waves, then, I should say, granting an action so entirely gratuitous and so utterly inconceivable—that such instances occurring once, and never afterwards, were themselves miracles. If that were not a miraculous effect of mind on matter, we ought to see something of it still.

Miracle, then, holds its place in every honest explanation of the external evidences of Christianity: and I think the same is true of the internal evidence.

With regard to this branch of the argument, various and vague impressions are prevailing which seem to me to possess no weight whatever, as furnishing substantive proof. They may be useful preliminaries or auxiliaries to conviction, but they are not its foundations. Such are the ideas that are entertained of the moral charm and beauty of the Scriptures, or of their adaptation to human wants; not to mention those enthusiasts, who profess to have a secret and intuitive perception of the divinity of those writings. But, granting the singular moral beauty and charm of the Scriptures, I see not how it constitutes proof. Suppose that a person had never heard of a revelation, and, seeking light and rest for his mind, were to take up some of the writings of Fenelon. Would he not feel the same kind of impression? Would he not be charmed with their beauty, and their adaptation to his necessities, and say, "This is just what I wanted; this must be the truth of God." And would he not very justly say this? What, then, would be the distinction between the writings of Fenelon and the records of inspiration? There is a difference between truth and revealed truth. A thing may be true, whether it is revealed or not; nay, it must be true independently of that consideration. But, Is it revealed to be true? is the question; and that question is overlooked in this view of the internal evidences. So in the writings of the "divine Plato" the reader will be amazed and charmed with the elevation, the exquisite moral discrimination and beauty of some of his thoughts; but will this prove that they are inspired? Indeed, it must be confessed, I think, that there is not one moral precept of the New Testament, but it may be found in the old heathen philosophers.

The only valid internal evidence which the New

Testament contains of being a revelation, is found in the proposition, that these writings possess altogether a character, for which nothing but special divine illumination can account. If some rustic youth should come to you with Newton's Principia in his hand, and satisfy you that he was its author, the fact would not be more astonishing, than it is that the fishermen of Galilee should have produced such a book as the New Testament. The character of Jesus is itself a moral miracle. This *is* evidence: and it will be more and more convincing, as we more and more clearly understand the nature of moral phenomena, the power of moral prejudice, and the difficulty of moral progress.

Still then, I find miracle in every species of satisfactory and substantive proof. And now I would ask, if there is any conceivable and sufficient evidence of revelation, but miracles? Suppose a man to stand before you and to say, "I am the bearer of a special communication from God." What would you—what must you ask of him, as the credentials of his mission? His air might be noble, his doctrine excellent, his speech divine. His communication might thrill you with awe, or with rapture. Would that satisfy you? If you were an enthusiast, it might; but if you were a philosopher, I am sure it would not. He might tell you things which above all things you wished to know. He might tell you, as Swedenborg has professed to do, of the very state of the blest who have departed from you, and of your own future state, how you were to live in that unknown world; and you might wish to believe it. What could make you believe it? I can conceive of but one thing,—*a miracle.* If he came from an earthly monarch, you would demand his credentials; the signet ring, or the sign manual. The chosen seal of the Almighty Monarch is *miracle!*

But I hear it said, "Could you receive a communication as from heaven, if it were evidently of bad tendency? And if not, then is not the excellence of the communication a part of the evidence?" I answer, No; it is only something presupposed in a case; not the proof that makes out the case. If a man undertakes to prove any thing to me, he must undertake to prove something that is credible. I cannot listen to him but upon that condition. It would be incredible, —a case not to be supposed nor argued upon, that the Almighty had sent to me a communication of evil tendency. I demand this condition then, that the message be good, but the condition is not the proof. That a thing is credible is necessary to its being credited; but the credibility of a thing is not to be confounded with the belief of it. The former is one of the postulates; the latter is the conclusion. They are completely distinct. Thus the lawyer, who argues in behalf of his client to a jury, must make a case that is credible; but the credibility is no part of the argument. And the juror who should say, "I was convinced by the internal likelihood of the case, and not by the witnesses nor by the arguments," would be thought a very bad reasoner, however well-disposed a man.

I have dwelt longer on this point than I wished; but it seemed to me important to show, if it be true, that Christianity is really founded on miracles, and that all attempts to escape from them in the matter of revelation are vain, and are especially proved to be vain by the very efforts to explain them away, to which their rejectors are driven.

But now let us examine, in as few words as may suffice, that presumption against miracles from which

these efforts have apparently risen, and see whether the presumption ought not in fact to be the other way.

And, first of all, I must beseech the inquirer to approach this subject in the purest spirit of philosophy. It is the constant suggestion of unbelief, that, to support the argument for a revelation, prejudice is necessary. Now I say, that is precisely the aid that we do not want. Nay more, I say that prejudice is the very obstacle, and the main obstacle, to true faith. I ask the skeptic to lay aside *his* prejudices. I ask him to be a philosopher; and yet more distinctively I say, a philosopher of the inductive school. Let him reason upon facts. Let him take nothing for granted. Let him assert nothing which he does not know; and deny nothing which, for all that he knows, may be true.

Now let us see how much is cut off from the ground of this inquiry by these discriminations. You are not to deny the possibility of miracles. Evidently, he who made and who controls all things, can modify and change them if it be his pleasure. The act of creation is but the grandest of miracles.*

* "The act of creation is but the grandest of miracles." This idea occurs in some of the French writers. I have met with it, I think, in Necker's "Moral Religieuse," and in the French preachers. But it seems to be used by them, rather as a figure of speech than otherwise. I do not introduce it as such. I hold it to be a philosophical truth. The act of the creation is the producing of new forms of being, out of the usual course of production. It is an event without any antecedent in the processes of nature. It is "a deviation from the uniformity of causation." And that is the definition of a miracle. That it is the *commencement* of a *series* of events does not affect this conclusion. The point of departure from the ordinary modes of production is none the less deviation, none the less miracle, for the regularity that follows. If the earth were suddenly arrested in its course, and made to take a retrograde movement through its orbit, for thousands of years, the point of

Again, you are not to say or suppose, that there is any difficulty in the performance of miracles, or that it requires any extraordinary, or any new exertion of divine power to produce the changes in question. You do not know but that every event in the universe springs from an immediate exertion of divine power, and, therefore, that one result is as naturally and easily produced, as another. In other words, you are not at liberty in the spirit of true philosophy, to regard

change would be miracle, and none the less miracle for the regularity that followed. And surely it would be no less a miracle, if a world were suddenly created; if solid matter instantly, at a word, filled the void space, and were launched forth upon its mighty career. All the difference in the cases, with reference to the point in hand, is made by an unphilosophical idea of causes: as if there were a tendency in antecedents to produce their consequents; a pushing on of one event by another; of which we know nothing And yet even then we might say, that there were causes in that void space to keep it void, and that those causes were arrested by the creative act which filled that space with matter.

When life is communicated to a dead body, what is that but the creation of life? Suppose that a human being were instantly created before our eyes, in full size and strength, would not that be just as great a deviation from the usual and natural course of pro duction, as it is to raise a dead body to life?

I have supposed, in another part of the Discourse, a world to be created in our sight. But, to present a more palpable case, and one directly beneath our eyes, suppose that, as we were looking upon a barren and blasted heath, it were suddenly covered with a crop of grain, ripe for the harvest. That would be creation, and that would be a miracle. And if we and many more saw that miracle, and knew moreover that it was wrought in attestation of a divine commission; nay more, if we harvested the grain, and ground and ate it, it would not only be philosophical to believe, but impossible to doubt. Thus, if I may speak so, did the Christian witnesses handle the evidence of the miracles they record.

But I am not now to pursue this argument beyond the point which is immediately before me, to wit, the credibility of miracles. And for this credibility, on the strictest grounds of philosophy, I say that the fact of creation is a sufficient warrant.

nature as a piece of mechanism; as a clock, for instance, which is wound up and has a natural or necessary tendency to run down. And you are not to say, that the need of a miracle to answer the purposes of the Author of nature implies some imperfection in the machinery of nature. The idea of machinery is a pure assumption. Des Cartes might as well have argued from those vortices, or whirlpools of ether, by which he supposed the heavenly bodies were moved, as we may argue from the notion of any other mechanism. Once more; all ideas of miraculous interference, as if it were derogatory to the Infinite Being, all presumptions on this point, drawn from the infinity of the universe, and the comparative insignificance of the earth and of man, are to be laid out of the question as entirely unphilosophical.

With these reasonable disclamations then, we come to the simple and unprejudiced experience of facts. We see an order in nature, not mechanical, not necessary, but appointed. *Can* that order be changed? Doubtless it can. To assert the impossibility of change, is to go far beyond our province. The power that ordained the succession of events, can modify them. *Has* the order of nature been in any instance interrupted? That is the great question. I am not now to discuss it. I have only to ask, if that question may not be fairly entertained; if it is not open to argument; if witnesses may not be called to testify; and if we are not bound to listen to them without setting up any bar of presumption against their testimony. Certainly, if there is no intrinsic and ascertained impossibility in the events alleged to have taken place, we *are* bound to listen.

But in what spirit shall we listen? With an extreme and almost insurmountable prejudice against

miracles? This is the assumption of unbelief. And on what is this assumption founded? "On experience," is the answer. And what now is this boasted experience? Is human experience the measure of divine power? Can a limited experience set bounds to possibility? What is this life's experience, but a childhood amidst the ages of eternity? Suppose that we were hereafter to be placed, for the correction of some mental errors, in a scene of being where *all* should be miracle, *all* change; where every thing should reveal the immediate action of the Almighty Power. Where would be experience then? Or, to illustrate the same point, let us revert to the truly philosophical, the primitive, experience. Suppose that the first man had been created before the heavens were spread forth, or the earth hung in the empty space, and that he had beheld those awful effects of Omnipotence. Would he, at the close of the first day of his existence, find it difficult to believe in miracles? Why then, should the experience of forty years, amidst regular successions of events, make him forget that miracles might again be a part of the course of nature? The experience that makes a man feel as if there could be no more miracles, seems to me narrow, and if I may say so, provincial; like that which makes an ignorant and home-bred rustic feel as if every thing in the great world must be just like what he had seen in his father's house, and fills him with astonishment, amounting to incredulity, at every thing new and extraordinary.

What is the spirit of a real and studious philosophy, in cases which, so far as the facts are considered, are precisely analagous to miracles. An extraordinary, unheard of, and before unknown fact is presented in nature. Water, for instance, is produced by the intense

combustion of two invisible gases. There are many men in the world who would say on the first proposition of such a marvel, that they would not believe it. But does the philosopher say so? Or does he wait, before he will believe, till he can resolve that fact into some order of nature? By no means. The fact has been submitted to the test of experiment, and he is satisfied. And he believes it, let me add, not because it belongs to any *order* of things, but because it has been proved by satisfactory experiments. The King of Siam would not believe, that the liquid and flowing water could become a solid body under his feet. He took the very ground of the skeptic about miracles. He had never seen water frozen; nobody in his country had ever seen it; and he would not believe it. Was that the ground of philosophy, or of prejudice? A man says, that he cannot and will not believe in miracles. And yet every object in the universe around him, had its origin in a miracle. And suppose that it were given us again to witness such displays of power. Suppose that another sun were created and placed in the heavens before our very eyes. Should we not believe the fact till we perceived that it was produced by some preëxisting, world-making machinery of causes? And yet I verily believe that that wonderful creation would not be more extraordinary, than to the discriminating moral eye is that great Light which burst upon the darkness of the world, eighteen centuries ago!

If, then, the strong and almost insuperable presumption against the doctrine of miracles, which many feel, is not justified by a strict philosophy, let us now proceed a step farther.

I am willing to concede something to this presumption; I wish to give it all the weight that it deserves;

but I do not conceive that it possesses the broadest characters of philosophy. It appears to me instinctive rather than rational, hasty rather than deliberate, and narrow rather than comprehensive. And I believe that the rational, deliberate, and comprehensive view of things is more than sufficient fairly to rebut the narrow, the hasty, and the instinctive view.

It is said, that nature and experience are against miracles. That a part of nature and experience is so, I admit; but I desire special attention to the remark that it is only a part. That the whole is so, I deny. Nay, I would invite your still more particular attention to the observation, that the parts of nature and experience which are against miracles are the lowest and humblest. It is the mechanical order of nature which is opposed to miracles, and not its grand, comprehensive meaning and principle. And it is a less cultivated experience which, feeling less the need of those truths that revelation discloses, is less disposed to admit of such a revelation, than the mind in its highest development.

Let us, then, go into the broad field of nature and experience, into that very field, where skepticism has found its stronghold, and see what it teaches us.

The particular course of things in nature is order; the great principle is beneficence; the adaptation of all things to the happiness of sensitive beings, the supply of all wants, the relief of all sufferings. Nay, order itself has its chief value in its uses; it is designed for the improvement of rational beings; and it has been well argued, on a former occasion in this place, that, "if the great purposes of the universe can best be accomplished by departing from its established laws, those laws will undoubtedly be suspended, and, though broken in the letter, they will be observed in

the spirit;" and hence that "miracles, instead of warring against nature, would concur with it."*

But let us cast a glance, first, not at human experience, but at the condition of irrational natures. The most striking feature in that condition is the adaptation of means to beneficent ends; of supplies to wants, of reliefs to unavoidable sufferings. Among all the tribes of animate life, there is not a creature so small, but contains within it a world of wonders; and wonders not of skill only, but of beneficence. The anatomy of a fly, the instinct of a spider, the economy of a hive of bees, the structure of an ant-hill, are each of them subjects which fill many ample pages in the books of philosophy; and fill them constructively with this one theme,—the goodness of the Creator, his gracious regard to the humblest thing that lives. If you rise higher in the scale of the creation, you find everywhere, multiplying and crowding upon you, the proofs of unspeakable goodness. In heaven, on earth, and abroad upon all the pathless seas, are innumerable creatures, possessing frames filled with the most exquisite adaptations of part to part, guided by kindly instincts, supplied with bountiful provisions, arrayed, as Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed, and provided with habitations, more perfect for the purposes, than palaces of cedar or marble.

To illustrate the argument which I design to draw from this appeal to nature, let me make a supposition entirely *at variance* with the facts to which we have now adverted. Suppose, then, that you had found any one tribe of the animal creation unprovided for. Suppose, that it had no appropriate food, or that it had no instinct to guide it to that food; that it knew not where to seek its sustenance, whether in the water

* Channing's Dudleian Lecture

or the air, or the earth. If we had seen any species of beings in this situation; if, for example, every summer should bring into existence a certain kind of bird, for which there was no suitable provision, or no guiding instinct; if we should see them flying about us, as if uncertain, destitute, and suffering, with wild screams testifying their anxiety and distress, apparently ignorant whether the night or the day was appointed for them, now rising in the air, now plunging into the water, and then madly dashing against the earth; if, I say, we had thus seen them holding a precarious and painful existence for a few weeks, and then miserably perishing; we should feel as if such a phenomenon was most extraordinary and astonishing; at war with the whole system of nature, and with all the proofs of divine benevolence. We do unhesitatingly pronounce the facts embraced in such a supposition impossible. If we were to study nature for ever, we should never expect to meet with any thing like this.

Now I apply this to the case of human nature. And I desire you to suspend your judgment of the comparison for one moment till I can fully lay it before you. Consider, in the first place, the dignity of the being, to illustrate whose condition this comparison is brought. Consider all the difference between animal sense, and a being so "infinite in faculties" as man. Suppose, in the next place, that this being, according to an unquestionable law of his nature, should improve his faculties to the highest degree conceivable, without the knowledge of a future life. And finally, suppose him, with all the craving wants, the soaring aspirations, and the exquisite, varied and multiplied sorrows of refined thought and feeling, to stand upon the earth, as it rolled in silence through the mighty void

of heaven,—with death all around him, and without one voice from beyond the realms of visible life to assure him that he should live hereafter,—and then say, whether this would not be a condition more mournful, more disastrous, more at war with the order of divine beneficence, than any catastrophe that ever could befall animal natures.

If any one distrusts this comparison, I must beg leave to doubt whether he fairly comprehends it. The truth is, that all the world has held to revelations in one form or another. By communications direct or traditional, by the voice of augurs or of prophets, by open miracle or inward light, all mankind have deemed themselves to have special guidance from above.

It is an important inference from this fact, that no one can very well estimate the case of supposed utter destitution; and, therefore, that it is extremely difficult for any individual to feel the whole and legitimate force of this argument. Every man has been trained up from childhood by a system of communications; and now, upon the very strength of these communications, or of the convictions they have inevitably inspired, he deems himself able to stand without them. But difficult as the task is made by the unfair position of the objector, I shall offer two or three observations, in close, tending to show the need, and therefore the likelihood, instead of the often alleged improbability, of an extraordinary revelation.

Leaving other communications out of the account, then, we, as Christians, say that about eighteen centuries ago, at a period at once of unprecedented intellectual development and equally prevailing skepticism, there appeared an extraordinary teacher from heaven. I am not now to offer any of the arguments for his divine mission, that seem to me so abundant and

overwhelming; but I think I am fully entitled by the circumstances to say, that there ought to be no presumption against it. For it is undeniable, that, amidst all the lights of Grecian and Roman civilization, the most important truths,—the unity and paternity of God, and the immortality of man,—were obscured; and it is but a reasonable inference, that without a revelation, they would have been overshadowed with doubt till now. And even the belief that prevailed in the minds of a few philosophers, seems to me singularly to have wanted vitality. There is more reasoning than conviction apparent in their discourses; and certainly their faith had but little influence on their lives. Cicero, we know, and others, amidst all their hopes, had strong doubts. And I maintain, not only from these examples, but from the experience of every powerful mind since, that no reasonings can relieve that great question from painful, from distressing uncertainty.

My argument, then, is from human experience, and from cultivated human experience. It is easy to see, that a rude age might less need the relief which a revelation on this point would give; and for this reason, as I hold, to rude ages it was not given. My argument, then, is from cultivated human experience. And this is the form into which it resolves itself. God is the author of life, and the former of the mind. It is fair to presume, that he, who has provided for the wants of the humblest animal life, would not doom the noblest creature he has made on earth, to overwhelming despondency and misery. Now I say, that, without a revelation, this result is inevitable. I maintain, that no scheme of a virtuous, improving and happy life can be made out, which leaves the doctrines

of God's paternal and forgiving mercy, and of human immortality, in great and serious doubt.

My friends, I bring home the case to myself, and to you. I know what it is to doubt, and I say that no man should judge of the effect of that doubt, till he knows by experience what it is; till, crushed by its weight, he has laid himself down to his nightly rest, too miserable and desperate to care whether he ever raised his head from that pillow of repose and oblivion; till every morning has waked him to sadness and despondency darker than the gloomiest night that ever clouded the path of earthly sorrow. It is not calamity, it is not worldly disappointment, it is not affliction, it is not grief, that I speak of; nor is it any of these that gives the greatest intensity to this doubt; it is a development of our own nature; it is the soul's own struggling with the mighty powers with which it is made to grapple; it is the longed-for and almost felt immortality, struck from our eager grasp; the light gone out; the heaven of our hope all overshadowed and dark. Yes, it is the consciousness of infinite desires and capacities, all blighted and broken down; it is the aspiring which suns and stars cannot bound, all shrunk and buried in a coffin and a grave! In short, it is the proper and legitimate state of a mind following the premises of the case to their just result; and not that worldly condition of the mind, which is no more fit to judge of this subject than childhood is to judge of the interests of an empire. And now I say, Is it hard to believe that God would interpose for humanity, so circumstanced? Is it incredible that he should send a voice into that deep and dark struggle for spiritual life and hope?

I appeal to *you*, my brethren. I appeal to the youth who are before me. It is thought that this age is wit-

nessing an unusual development of infidel principles. One whole nation, indeed. has fallen a victim to them. And what is new and striking, it is said, has a kind of fascination for youth. But I hold that this is an age, too, which is witnessing an extraordinary development of sensibility in the young. This arises from an earlier, I had almost said, a premature education; from an exciting literature; and from the character of enterprise and expectation which now invests all the interests and prospects of society. But I ask, Is this an age when you can safely break the great bond of faith and hope? If yours were a dull and sluggish youth, or a youth amidst rude and barbarous times, it might not yield me the argument which I now seek. But I know that in this age, ay, and in this assembly, there is many a youthful heart, whose daily experience is the strongest possible proof of the need, and therefore of the likelihood, of a divinely sanctioned religion. Ay, I know, and many a sorrowing parent in this land knows, that the period of youth cannot be safely passed without it. Those thronging passions, those swaying sympathies of social life, the deeper musings of solitary hours, the imaginations, the affections, the thoughts, unuttered and unutterable,—all the sweeping currents that bear the youthful heart it scarcely knows whither, —all show that it cannot be thrown, without infinite peril, to drift upon a sea of doubt.

Humanity, in fine, and especially in its growing cultivation, is too hard a lot, it appears to me, if God has not opened for it the fountains of revelation. Without that great disclosure from above, human nature stands, in my contemplation of it, as an anomaly amidst the whole creation. The noblest existence on earth is not provided with a resource even so poor as instinct. On the heart that is made to bear the weight of infinite

interests, sinks the crushing burthen of doubt and despondency, of fear and sorrow, of pain and death, without resource, or relief, or comfort, or hope. The cry of the young ravens, the buzzing of insect life in every hedge, is heard; but the call that comes up from the deep and dark conflict of the overshadowed soul, dies upon the vacant air; and there is no ear to hear, nor eye to pity. Oh! were it so, what could sustain the human heart, sinking under the burthen of its noblest aspirations? "The still, sad music of humanity," sounding on through all time, would lose every soothing tone, and would become a wail, in which the heart of the world would die!

And why must any man think that the world is left to that darkness and misery? Because he cannot believe that a communication has been made from heaven in the only conceivable way in which it *can* be made and *proved;* by miracles. For I affirm, that if that great preliminary difficulty were over, all difficulties would vanish before the stupendous proofs of a revelation. He that thinks, then, that the world is left to nature's darkness, thinks thus, I repeat, because he cannot believe in miracles; because he cannot admit that the order of nature, which is itself not an end, but a means to an end, may be interrupted for the greatest of all ends; because he will not admit, that the Infinite Power is superior to the laws itself has made; because he will not allow, in his philosophy, that liberty to the Infinite Parent, in changing and adapting his provisions to the wants of his children, that he allows to every earthly parent. Is this the childlike and trustful, the deep-searching and discerning, the expansive and unprejudiced spirit of true philosophy, or is it the shallow and skeptical spirit of bondage to the mere

outward forms and processes of things, regardless of their higher meanings and ends?

Here for the present I leave the subject. I have not undertaken in this discourse to prove the truth of Christianity; but, if I have succeeded in removing the great obstacle, in opening the door to the argument; the conclusion, I think, will easily follow. I have not undertaken to prove that there have been miracles; but I do hold myself entitled to say, as the close and inference of this discourse, that I should wonder if there had not been miracles. The philosophical presumption is for, rather than against them. Nature is for, more than it is against them; its mechanical order only being against them, while its whole spirit is in their favour. Man's necessity, God's mercy, is for them; and against them is—what? What is against all legitimate wisdom and conviction? Why, only a doubt,—which is mostly vague and irresponsible,—which, because it is a doubt, holds itself scarcely bound to give a reason; and which, though it is a doubt, sits immovable, as if it held the very seat of knowledge, and throne of reason. To allow it to sit there undisturbed, is to yield more deference to a shadow than to the very substance of reason and truth.

THE SCRIPTURE

CONSIDERED AS THE RECORD OF A REVELATION.

It has become very important, as it seems to us, that the advocates of a divine revelation should carefully and accurately define the ground which they undertake to defend. In logical order, this task is preliminary to the defence itself. Our position is to be taken before it is to be maintained. What *is it* to believe in a revelation? Or, in other words, what is the question between the believer, and the unbeliever? This we shall undertake to define, in the first place, and then shall offer some general remarks on belief and unbelief.

There are two methods by which mankind may arrive at the knowledge of truth. The one, is by observation, by reflection, by reasoning, by the natural exercise of the human faculties. The other is, by a supernatural communication from Heaven; and this different from, and superior to, reasoning, observation, intuition, impulse, and every known operation of the human mind. Now we contend that it is in a communication of this nature that our scriptures originated.

But let us consider more particularly the vehicle of this communication—the Scriptures. It is on this point that believers differ somewhat among themselves. And it is from rash positions on this subject, or from marking too negligently and too broadly the lines of defence, that the advocates of a revelation expose them-

selves to the strongest attacks of infidelity. The Scriptures, then, it might seem needless to say, are not the actual communication made to the minds that were inspired from Above; but they are a '*declaration* of those things which were most surely believed among them.'* They are not the actual word of God, but they are a 'record of the word of God'.† They are of the nature of a testimony. 'We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.'‡ This distinction, obvious as it may seem, is not without its importance; and it unhappily derives some consequence from the earnestness with which it is opposed. To say so simple a thing as that the Bible is not the original, the very revelation made to the prophets and apostles, but the record of that revelation, is an excess of temerity thought to be worthy of the most heinous charges.

But the distinction is intrinsically important. It is important to make the discrimination, and to say, that the communication of light and truth was one thing, and the record of that communication another. The communication was divine; the record was human. It was, strictly speaking and every way, a human act. The manner, the style, the phraseology, the choice of words, the order of thought, the selection of figures, comparisons, arguments, to enforce the communication, was altogether a human work. It was as purely human, as peculiarly individual in the case of every witness, as his accent, attitude, or gesture, when delivering his message. And, indeed, we might as well demand that Paul's gesture or intonation on Mars' Hill, should be faultless, as to demand that the style of his letter to the Galatians should be faultless; for, in truth, the action and the accent were

* Luke i. 1. † Rev. i. 2. ‡ John iii. 11

as truly a part of the communication, as the words employed to set it forth. We are about to argue for this general position, and in doing so we shall more clearly define and guard it; but we wished to state it with some precision in the outset. If there ever were productions which showed the fire and fervent workings of human thought and feeling, they are our Scriptures. We know not how it is possible for any one candidly to read, or thoroughly to study them, without coming to this conclusion. And we say, therefore, that the question between the believer and the unbeliever is, not whether the words of this communication are grammatically the best words, not whether the illustrations are rhetorically the best illustrations, not whether the arguments are logically the best arguments; but the question is, whether there is any communication at all. Let any man admit this, let him admit it in any shape, and though there may be difficulties and disputes, we shall find no difficulty in settling beyond all dispute, some truths from the Scriptures; and truths, too, of dearer concern to us than all the visible interests of this world.

But is this view of the Bible a right and safe one? To this question let us now proceed.

1. Let us, as the first step, proceed to inquire of the Scriptures themselves. We say, then, that what has now been stated, is the natural, and we might say, the unavoidable impression which a reader would take from the perusal of the Scriptures. The vehicle of revelation is language. The things we have to deal with are words. They are not divine symbols of thought; they are not pure essences of ideas; they are words. The vehicle, we say, is language. We shall soon undertake to show, that language is, from its very nature, an imperfect instrument of communi-

cation. But, for the present, we only say, that the language of revelation is the natural language of the period to which, and of the men to whom we refer it. The idioms of speech, the peculiarities of style, the connections and dependences of thought and reasoning, the bursts of feeling, all seem to us as natural in the Bible as they are in any other book. We see ideas, indeed, that we ascribe to inspiration; but we see no evidence, we can discern no appearance of any supernatural influence exerted upon the *style*, either to make it perfect, or to prevent it from being imperfect. Let us compare the Scriptures with other writings. If we open almost any book, especially any book written in a fervent and popular style, we can perceive, on an accurate analysis, that some things were hastily written, some things negligently, some things not in the exact logical order of thought; that some things are beautiful in style, and others coarse and inelegant; that some things are clear, and others obscure or "hard to be understood." And do we not find all these things in the Scriptures? What is a sound and rational criticism but a discernment of just such things as these? What is peculiarity of style but something proceeding from the particular mind of the writer; but something, therefore, partaking, not of divine ideas, but of human conceptions? And who has more of this peculiarity of style than John, or Paul? And now suppose that Paul had written a letter to any one of his friends on religion, and had written not in his apostolical character; that he had said, as he sometimes did say, this is 'not from the Lord?' Can any rational man doubt, whether that letter would have exhibited the same style as his recorded epistles?

If such, then, be the natural impression arising from the perusal of the Scriptures, we are so to receive them, unless they themselves direct us otherwise. Do they direct us otherwise? Do they anywhere tell us that the manner of writing, the style, the words, came from immediate divine suggestion, or were subject to miraculous superintendence? To us it is clear that the passages usually adduced in support of these views of inspiration, fall entirely short of the positions they are brought to establish. 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;' and 'holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;'—these are the passages. Now the question is, whether these declarations refer to the matter of revelation, or to the style; to the substance of the communication, or to the form; to the thing testified, given, spoken, or to the manner of speaking, imparting, testifying. We say, to the matter, the substance, the thing testified. Others insist, that reference is had to the style, the form, the manner, also. There is nothing in the words to decide between us, and we must have resort, therefore, to general considerations. We must go to the general aspect and obvious character of the sacred writings. And on this subject we have a statement to make, which is worthy of special observation. So strong is the aspect of *naturalness* upon the whole face of the Scriptures, so marked are the peculiarities of individual thought, manner and style, that many of the most learned and profound Orthodox scholars have given up the doctrine of immediate suggestion, and retain only that of a general superintendence. But we surely may remind them, that the Scriptures themselves furnish as little warrant for the doctrine of superintendence as for that of suggestion. If the passages before quoted prove anything with regard to style, they prove immediate suggestion.

If they prove nothing on this point, then the Bible does not anywhere; for they are the strongest in the Bible.

The doctrine of superintendence, undoubtedly, comes not from the Scriptures, but from what is thought to be the exigency of the case. It is introduced to save the sacred writings from the charge of possible error; a charge which we shall by and by undertake to show, does not, in anything material, attach to them, on what we think to be a more rational and unincumbered theory. We see no need of supposing the apostles, for instance, to have spoken and written under any other influence than that of truth and goodness; truth supernaturally communicated to them, but not by them supernaturally taught. The teaching, in short, is full of nature and truth. And we should, with as much reason, demand that Paul's speech should have been freed from that impediment or infirmity, which made some among the Corinthians declare it to be "contemptible," as that his style should be freed from those obscurities, those imperfections, in other words, which made Peter say that it is "hard to be understood." And we might as well say, that when his accent or gesture was liable to be wrong, there was a divine superintendence or interference to put it right, as to say this with regard to his written expressions, his figures and illustrations, his style and mode of communication.

2. That there was no supernatural perfection, or accuracy, or infallibility, in the Scriptural style or mode of communication, we think any one may be convinced by considering, in the next place, the very nature of language.

Human language is essentially and unavoidably an imperfect mode of communication. It is sufficiently correct; but the idea of absolute perfection or infallibility, if it were rightly and rigidly considered, does not

and cannot belong to it. We are not merely saying, now, that the style of our Christian teachers is not perfect, according to the laws of rhetoric; that it is not perfect Greek. That is admitted on all hands. But we say that it is not perfect, because it cannot be perfect, as an instrument of thought. Perfection and imperfection in this matter are words of comparison. Absolutely, they do not apply to language. Excellence, or, if any one pleases to call it so, perfection in style, is something relative. It is relative, for instance, to the age and country in which it is delivered. What is perfect for one people and period, is not perfect for another. It would happen, then, that even if the sacred style had possessed some unintelligible perfection for its own age, it would have lost it for the next, and for every succeeding age. Is it not felt by every judicious commentator, that the ancient phraseology in which the Scriptures are clothed, throws great difficulties in the way of understanding them? Are not these difficulties such, that the mass of mankind cannot, of themselves, understand certain passages, and must receive the explanation of them on trust? To what purpose is it, then, to argue for the infallibility of the sacred style? Language is also relative to the mind, the mind absolutely considered. A perfect or infallible language must be that which conveys perfect or infallible thoughts to the mind. But now when we talk about perfect or infallible thoughts, are we not very much beyond our depth? Can any instrument convey to us thoughts which are perfect, which are capable of being no more clear or true, which are never to be changed in the slightest degree, in all the coming and brightening dispensations of our being? To us, it seems as if there were great presumption in the prevailing language about truth and error. As if any sect or any set

of men, called Christians, or called by any other name; as if any human being held the absolute, the abstractly pure, and unchangeable truth! As if any creed or language, or human thought *could* escape every taint of error; as if it could put off all limitation, obscurity, peculiarity and everything that marks it as belonging to a finite and frail nature! "To err is human." It is a part of our dispensation to find our way to truth through error. The perfect is wrought out from the imperfect. We see this in children; and in this respect, we are all but children.

The thought came pure from the All-revealing Mind; but when it entered the mind of a prophet or apostle, it became a human conception. It could be nothing else, unless that mind, by being inspired, became superhuman. The inspired truth became the subject of human perception, feeling, and imagination; and when it was communicated to the world, it was clothed with human language; and that perception, feeling, imagination, lent its aid to this communication, as truly as to any writings that ever were penned. It is this, next to the authority of the Scriptures, it is this naturalness, simplicity, pathos, and earnestness of manner, that give them such life and power.

The case, then, stands thus. It has pleased God to adopt human language as the instrument of his communications to men; an instrument sufficiently correct, though not absolutely perfect. We might as reasonably demand that the men should be faultless, as that the style should be faultless. Neither were so. And as the faults and mistakes of the men, do not invalidate the sufficiency of their main testimony, still less would any faults or inaccuracies of their style, figures, illustrations, or arguments, if proved to exist, set aside the great, interesting, and, among Christians, the unques-

tioned matters of revelation, which they have laid before us.

3. A word, now, in the third place, on the unavoidable or actual concessions, upon this subject, among all intelligent and sober Christians. Let us see if they do not lead us to the same result. It must be admitted that the inspired penmen usually wrote in conformity with the philosophy of their respective ages, in conformity, therefore, with some portions of natural and metaphysical philosophy that are false. The common remark on this subject, is, that they did not profess to give instructions on astronomy, demonology, or metaphysics, but on religion. In briefly passing this point, we should like to ask those who so zealously insist that the phrase, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," refers to every word, or to every idea in the Bible, what they are to do with the Mosaic theory of the solar system, and of the starry heavens? But to proceed with the concessions to which we have referred. It cannot be denied that there are some slight discrepances in the evangelical narratives. And, indeed, the common and the very just answer to this allegation in our books of evidences, is, that these differences, so far from weakening the testimony, strengthen it, by showing that there was no collusion among the witnesses. Once more, it is common now to admit, that the Bible is to be interpreted as other books are. But we do not see how it is possible to enter thoroughly into the spirit of this rule, unless the *composition* of the Bible is looked upon as a human work—a work produced by the natural operation of human thought and feeling. If there was frequent and supernatural interference with the writer's natural mode of expressing himself, such a fact, it seems to us, would seriously disturb the application of the rule laid down, and would, in fact, warrant

many of those superstitious and irrational views of the Scriptures, which are fatal to just criticism and sound scholarship.

If, then, it be admitted that there are among our sacred books, mistakes in philosophy, and discrepances, however slight, in statements of facts, and if the Bible is subject to the ordinary rules of criticism on language, the inference seems unavoidable, that these writings, so far as their composition is concerned, are to be regarded as possessing a properly and purely human character.

4. But we come now to the great difficulty and objection. It is said that if these views are correct, the Bible is a fallible book, and unworthy of reliance. We maintain, therefore, in the fourth place, that the infallibility which many Christians contend for, and upon the defence of which unbelievers are willing enough to put them, is, in our apprehension, unnecessary to the validity and sufficiency of the communication.

What *is* a revelation? It is simply the communication of certain truths to mankind; truths, indeed, which they could not otherwise have fully understood or satisfactorily determined; but truths nevertheless as easy to be communicated as any other. Why then is there any more need of supernatural assistance in this case, than in any other? We are constantly speaking to one another without any fear of being misunderstood. We are constantly reading books without any of this distrust; and books, too, written by men in every sense fallible, which the Scripture writers, in regard to the revelation made to them, are not. Nay, we are reading books of abstruse philosophy, in the full confidence that we understand the general doctrines laid down. But the matters of revelation are not

abstruse. They are designed to be understood by the mass of mankind. They are designed, like the light, to shine upon man's daily path. What if a man should say he cannot trust the light of the sun, and will not walk by it, because it comes through so earthly and fallible a medium as the atmosphere? The air, certainly, is an imperfect medium of light. There are motes and mists and clouds in it. Yet we have not the least doubt, that we see the sun, and the path that we walk in, and the objects around us. It does not destroy the nature of light that it comes to us through the dense and variable atmosphere; and it does not destroy the nature of truth that it comes to us through the medium of human language.

But let us descend to particulars. What particular truth, then, that either does belong to revelation, or has been conceived to belong to it, requires an infallible style, or a supernatural influence for its communication? Not the Messiahship of Jesus, and his living, teaching, suffering, and dying to save us from sin and misery; not the assurance of God's paternal love and mercy and care for us; not the simple but solemn and most glorious doctrine of a future life; not precept, not promise, not warning, nor encouragement, nor offered grace and aid. But suppose it be contended that more belongs to the revelation; "fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute." Suppose it be conceded, that the matter of any or every creed that Christians have made, belongs to it. Yet their makers, we presume, will not maintain that any inspiration or supernatural guidance is necessary to set forth these matters. *They* surely cannot feel any particular distrust about the powers of language. They who have made creeds on purpose to remedy the imperfections, or clear up the obscurities, or settle the uncertainties of the Scriptural communication,

they surely are not the persons we have to contend with in this argument.

"But ah!" it is said, "this sort of reasoning leads to infidelity." "Saves us from infidelity," the objector might more truly say. This, at least, is the purpose of our reasonings; and we believe it is their tendency. Unbelievers have derived more plausible and just objections from the prevailing theological assumptions with regard to our sacred books, than from any other quarter. The attacks which are usually made upon the philosophy of Moses, the imprecations of David, the differences among the apostles, the obscurities of Paul, and upon instances of puerility, coarseness, and indelicacy in style, or inappositeness in illustration, are all of this nature. If it were considered that the successive communications which God has made to the world, have borne upon them the signs and marks of their successive ages; if it were considered, that the light, in its visitations to the earth, has struggled through the medium of human imperfection, through mists of prejudice, and clouds, often indeed, gorgeous clouds of imagination; many difficulties and objections of this sort would be removed.

"But how shall we know what is true and what is false; what belonged to the age, and what to the light?" This difficulty is more specious than real. When applied in detail to the Scriptures, it will be found to amount to very little. There can be no doubt, for instance, about matters of morality and duty. Indeed, it has often been admitted by our Christian apologists, that a revelation was not so much needed to tell us what is right, as to give sanctions for it. Then, again, with regard to these sanctions, with regard to the future good and evil, we believe no one has ever pretended to deny them, or ever will, on the ground that the sacred

writers may have been mistaken. Very few, indeed, do deny them. The great body of Universalists, as we are informed, now believe in a future retribution. And so, as to all the absolute doctrines of Scripture, there is no dispute about the authority on which they rest. The only question is, whether some of the illustrations are judicious, belonging as they do to the school of Jewish allegory; and whether one or two of the arguments of Paul are logical. But this question, surely, does not touch matters that fairly belong to the very different department of immediate inspiration. "Whoever appeals to reason," it has been very justly said, "waives, *quoad hoc*, his claim to inspiration." When an inspired teacher says to us, "This doctrine is true;" that is one thing; we receive the declaration on his simple authority. But when he says, "I can prove this to you by a series of arguments;" that is another thing. When he says, "this is true, *because*" —the utterance of that word arouses our reason. It is not implicit faith that is then demanded, but an attentive consideration of the force of arguments. The thing argued demands faith; but the argument, from its very nature, appeals to reason; and it is the very office of reason to judge whether the argument is sound and sufficient. And so when a sacred writer says, "This doctrine is true, and it is *like* such a thing, or it may be so illustrated," he appeals to our judgment and taste, and we may, without in the least questioning the thing asserted, inquire into the fitness, force, and elegance of the illustration, allegory, or figure, by which it is set forth.

5. If now any one shall say that this amounts to a rejection of Christianity; if for any purpose, fair or unfair, if with any intention, honest or dishonest, he shall take it upon him to say, that in advocating these

views of inspiration we are no better than infidels in disguise, we cannot descend from the ground we occupy, we should not think it decent, with the known professions which we make, to dispute the point with him. But we would remind him, that many of the brightest lights and noblest defenders of our religion fully maintain the ground we have taken, to be Christian ground. Erasmus says, "It is not necessary that we should refer everything in the apostolic writings, immediately to supernatural aid. Christ suffered his disciples to err, even after the Holy Ghost was sent down, but not to the endangering of the faith." Grotius says, "It was not necessary that the matters narrated, should be dictated by the Holy Spirit; it was enough that the writer had a good memory." "It is possible," says the learned Michaelis, "to doubt, and even to deny the inspiration of the New Testament, [he means inspiration not only of words, but of ideas, which we do not deny,] and yet to be fully persuaded of the truth of the Christian religion." Because, he argues, the facts being true, the testimony being one of ordinary validity, the religion must be true. On this observation of Michaelis, Bishop Marsh says, "Here our author makes a distinction which is at present very generally received, between the divine origin of the Christian doctrine, and the divine origin of the writings in which that doctrine is recorded." "The wisdom contained in the Epistles of Paul," says Dr. Powell, late Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, "was given him from Above, and very probably the style and composition were his own." Dr. Paley makes the same distinction. "In reading the apostolic writings," he observes, "we distinguish between their doctrines and their arguments. Their doctrines came to them by revelation, properly so called; yet in propounding these doctrines, they were wont to illustrate,

support, and enforce them by such analogies, arguments, and considerations as their own thoughts suggested." To the same purpose, Bishop Burnet. "When," says he, "divine writers argue upon any point, we are always bound to believe the conclusions that their reasonings end in, as parts of divine revelation; but we are not bound to be able to make out, or even to assent to, all the premises made use of by them in their whole extent, unless it appear plainly that they affirm the premises as expressly as they do the conclusions proved by them."

We have thus endeavoured to free the Scriptures from the burden of supporting a character, to which, as we believe, they nowhere lay any claim; the character, that is, of being, in every minute particular, perfect and infallible compositions. The question, we now repeat, the momentous, the most interesting question between the believer and the unbeliever, is, whether God has made special and supernatural communications of his wisdom and will to man, and whether the Bible contains those communications? To us, it appears of great consequence, that the controversy should be disembarrassed from all extraneous difficulties, and should be reduced to this simple point. We repeat it, therefore, that when prophet or apostle presents himself to us as a messenger from God, we receive him in the simple and actual character, which has been marked out in this discussion. We consider him as saying, "I bear to you a message from God, to which I demand reverent heed; I give you, from divine inspiration, assurance of certain solemn and momentous truths; but I do not say that every word and phrase I use, every simile and allegory and consideration by which I endeavour to explain or enforce my message, is divine, any more than that my countenance, speech, and action

are divine. The distinction is easy, and you ought not to misapprehend it. I speak to you from God; but still I am a man. I speak after the manner of men, and for the peculiarities of my own manner, mind, country, and age, I do not presume to make the Universal and Eternal Wisdom answerable." It is as when an earthly government sends its ambassador to a revolted province. The person invested with such a character has a twofold office to discharge. He has to lay down propositions, to make offers of forgiveness and reconciliation. These are from the government. He has to explain and urge these propositions and offers, by such language, illustrations, and arguments as the exigency requires. These are from himself. "It is thus," might the ambassador of God say, "it is thus that I address the children of men. My message is divine: my manner of delivering it, is human."

And albeit it were a man that spoke thus to us, and however it might be that he spoke after the manner of men, yet if he could say with a voice of authority and assurance, "God is love; like as a father pitieth his children, so God pities you; he watches over you with a kind care; he offers you forgiveness, and redemption from sin; he opens to you the path of immortal life;" if he could say these things, it would be a message which no words could adequately express. We should not say as the ancient skeptics did of Paul, "His bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible," although he should offend our taste, or our prejudices, in every phrase or figure by which he communicated the glorious truth. We should rather, with the Galatians, "receive him as an angel of God," and would kiss the hem of his garment, though the storms of every sea, and the dust and stripes of every city had rent and soiled it. There *is* nothing on earth of privi-

lege, distinction, or blessing, to compare with this simple faith. How many a stricken and sorrowing mind has been supported and soothed by that holy reliance! How many a bleeding heart has stanched its wounds in that healing fountain! How many a spirit, wearied with the vanities, or worn down with the cares of this world, has sought that blessed refuge! Nor is it trouble, or sorrow, or sickness, or bereavement only that has resorted here, and could go nowhere else; but the boundless, the ever-craving soul, that sighs for an immortal life and an infinite good, how often has it exclaimed, "To whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of everlasting life!" To tell us that all which we believe is nothing, because it does not come up to the demands of some technical creed, or for any other reason, seems to us an absurdity and madness of assertion, at which, instead of inveighing, we can only wonder.

ON THE

NATURE AND EXTENT OF INSPIRATION.*

THE Professor of Theology in the Andover Seminary will excuse us, we trust, if we postpone his claims, for a while, to the less agreeable task of dealing with adversaries who are assailing us with weapons far different from those which he uses. With this remark to guard against even a momentary misapprehension, we shall take up the matter of our thoughts *ab origine*.

One of the evils of controversy, is, that men are driven by it into extremes of opinion. The sound and sober conclusions at which they arrive in calmer times, are made to give way to extravagant positions, injurious to the minds of those who hold them, injurious to the cause of Christianity, and favourable only to the attacks of its enemies. Inquiry is pursued under many undue biases indeed, but especially under the bias of a wish to put opponents and adversaries in the wrong. New tests, not only of practical religion, but of Christianity itself, are set up, in order to exclude unwelcome opinions from the ground of our common faith, and the maintenance of such opinions from the credit of cherishing its virtues.

It is of some importance, at such times, to look to the foundation of our faith, and to call to mind its

* Review of "Lecture on the Inspiration of the Scriptures. By Leonard Woods, D. D., Abbot Professor of Christian Theology in the Theological Seminary, Andover."

most judicious and able defenders, to point to the old and firm landmarks and standards, in order to show that these periodical freshets of theological zeal, which bear away "the wood and the hay and the stubble," are not powerful enough to remove those landmarks and standards;—to show that they will spend their force and pass away, and leave all that is weighty and strong in our religion, just where it was before. We say it is of some importance. It is not of such importance as if we were defending the very ground of our faith and hope. It is only pointing with our finger, and showing where the foundations are. He who feels his house to be strong and firm, cannot be disturbed if his neighbour, with misplaced zeal or benevolence, should tell him that it is all decaying and sinking beneath him. He may listen to him with an incredulous smile, and may good-naturedly go around with him from pillar to pillar, and show him that what he apprehends to be fatal defect, is the mere rubbish that surrounds them.

It might awaken a stronger feeling, if that neighbour should evidently take pleasure in the alleged unsoundness, if he should exult in the downfall he predicted, and if he should pertinaciously insist upon the point, manifestly with the design to injure the property in the great market of public opinion. But still the feeling would be a calm one, and would be only strengthened into a firmer and more fearless confidence. He would perhaps put his hand upon the foundation or upon the pillar, and shake it, with the most careless exertion of his strength, that he might show it to be safe.

It is for all these reasons, that we shall task ourselves for a few moments to examine the totally unauthorised and groundless character of the charge

now pressed against us, of being, notwithstanding our Christian profession, ourselves Infidels. But for the same reasons, we cannot anticipate that we shall awaken in ourselves much zeal on the subject. We cannot, as we have said on a former occasion, fairly descend into the arena of argument; we cannot seriously put ourselves in contest at this point of recent attack; for, with our professions, it would seem to us a moral indecorum so to do. We must take our stand aloof from this, and simply point out to our prying opponents, whether friendly or unfriendly, their mistake.

We lay our hands strongly, then, upon the foundation—the Bible. We say THERE *is a communication from Heaven. There* is light supernaturally communicated, and attested, to those Heaven-commissioned prophets and apostles, who in their turn, have simply, naturally, each after the manner of his own age, his own style, his own peculiar habits of thought and feeling, imparted it to us. *There* are truths recorded, beyond the human reach of the men who delivered them, and they are truths dearer to us than life.

Right or wrong in our conviction, this is what we believe. We are not reasoning now with infidels; if we were, we should undertake to show that we are right. But we are expostulating, we cannot reason, with those who deny us the credit of the faith we profess; and we say to them, again, right or wrong, this is what we believe. Our opponents must pardon us, if we seem to them to speak loftily in a case like this. We put it to them, whether they could do less in similar circumstances. If the Catholics, or if we ourselves, were seriously and perseveringly to lay the charge against them, of being infidels in disguise, we ask them if they could consent gravely to argue upon

it? We put the case to their own feelings, and we say to them, as they would say to us or to others, in a change of circumstances; "With all our solemn professions before them, with all our preaching and our prayers in the name of Christ, with all our labours to illustrate the holy Scriptures, with all our publications, our books, our commentaries; with all these things before them, we say that the charge they bring is not *decent;* and in common decency, we cannot descend to argue the point with them."

The only decent allegation which they could bring, is, that our views tend to produce infidelity. On this point we should be at issue with them, and should be willing to reason. We are at issue with them, indeed; for we say that their own views much more tend to produce infidelity. Nay, we seriously believe that it is our system, with thinking minds, that will prove to be the only sufficient defence and barrier against utter unbelief; and this is one great reason why we are anxious for its prevalence. We are perfectly willing to admit at the same time, that no speculative views are, with all persons and in all circumstances, an effectual preservative. We admit that some Unitarians in foreign countries have become infidels. But do not our opponents know, that many Calvinists, many Orthodox persons, not in other countries alone, but in this also, have become infidels; and that multitudes of Catholics abroad, believers in the Trinity and the atonement and many kindred points of doctrine, have fallen into utter disbelief of the Christian revelation? Doubtless there is a medium somewhere, which is perfect truth and secure faith; and we believe,—without arrogance we hope, since it is a matter of simple sincerity and consistency so to believe—that we are nearest to that medium.

It seems to us not a little extraordinary, and it illustrates indeed the observation with which we commenced these remarks, that while our Orthodox brethren are charging us with these disguised and subtle errors, they do so completely wrap themselves up, as to all the difficult points of this controversy concerning inspiration, in general implications with regard to their own faith in the scriptures, and that they push those implications to an extent so utterly indefensible, so utterly unauthorised, at any rate, by many of the highest standards of their own churches. And we must add that it seems to us a fact still more irreconcileable with candour and good faith, that while, with a view to show what our faith, or as they will have it, what our unbelief is—while, we say, for this professed purpose, they take brief sentence and disjointed members of sentences here and there from our writings, they altogether suppress the strong and full declarations we make of our belief in a supernatural communication to the inspired teachers of our religion; that they never tell their readers or hearers, that we "earnestly contend for this faith" against unbelievers, and profess to find in it the highest joy and hope of our being. This, we must remind them, is an utter violation of all the received courtesies of religious controversy. For a reasoner to charge upon opponents his inferences as their faith, has long been branded as one of the most inadmissible practices in controversy. But pertinaciously to do this, in the face of the most deliberate protestations to the contrary, and without noticing such protestations; and this, too, before communities that either have not the means, or will not use them, of learning the truth, is a conduct for which we would gladly see any tolerable apology. For if he who "robs us of our good name," does an inexcusable action, what

shall we say of him, who, without affording us any remedy, robs us of the name we most honour and value? We will not say what; we regret the necessity of saying thus much.

But we would invite those from whose lips the charge of infidelity so easily falls, to forsake the convenient covert of general implication; and to tell us, in good truth, what they themselves believe on some of the matters of accusation that seems to them so weighty.

In labouring to fix upon us the charge of infidelity, they quote from us as proof, the statement, that "the inspired penmen wrote in conformity with the philosophy of their respective ages—in conformity therefore with some portions of natural and metaphysical philosophy, that are false." We ask if they themselves believe any otherwise? Do they believe that the sacred writers foresaw the discoveries of modern science? If they had this foresight, these matters would not have been left for discovery.

Again, we have said, "It cannot be denied that there are some slight discrepances in the evangelical narratives;" and this, too, has been quoted as evidence of our unbelief. But can it be denied? Does any intelligent student of the Scriptures—do our accusers deny it? We confess that we are surprised to read a citation like this, because we consider it as a conceded point, in some of our best and best authorised books of evidences, that there are such discrepances, and because it is argued by our Christian apologists, as it was by ourselves, that these discrepances give additional credit to the evangelical witnesses, by showing that there could have been "no collusion among them."

One further extract. We remarked that "unbelievers have derived more plausible and just objections from

the prevailing theological assumptions with regard to our sacred books, than from any other quarter;" and then went on to say, that "the attacks which are usually made upon the philosophy of Moses, the imprecations of David, the differences among the apostles, the obscurities of Paul, and upon instances of puerility, coarseness, and indelicacy in style, and inappositeness in illustration, are all of this nature." These expressions, again, are quoted as confirmation strong of our infidelity. On each of these points we should like to put those who arraign us to the question, and to see where *they* stand. Do *they* believe in the philosophy of Moses? Do they reject the Copernican system in astronomy, and maintain with Moses, who wrote in conformity with Jewish astronomy, that the heavens are a solid concave, in which the sun, planets and stars, like splendid balls of light, perform a daily revolution around the earth? The answer of the rational defender of a revelation to the infidel objection arising from this quarter, is easy. He says that Moses was not commissioned to teach philosophy, but religion. But of this answer our opponents deprive themselves, since to question the philosophy of Moses is with them a sign of infidelity.

Next, "the imprecations of David"—do they undertake to defend them? Speaking of his enemy, David uses the following tremendous supplications;—"Set thou a wicked man over him, and let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few, and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg. Let the extortioner also catch all that he hath, and let the strangers spoil his labour. Let there be none to ex-

tend mercy unto him; neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off, and in the generation following let their name be cut off. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out." It is impossible not to say with Le Clerc, these are the words of a man "full of excessive choler, and an extreme desire to be revenged. And yet," says he, "some famous divines have put in the title to this Psalm, that David, as a type of Jesus Christ, being driven on by a singular zeal, prays that vengeance may be executed on his enemies! But where," he says, "do they find that Jesus Christ does curse his enemies at that rate?" Another caption reads that "David, complaining of his slanderous enemies, under the person of Judas, devoteth them." But the truth is, all these explanations are perfectly gratuitous. They are worse than gratuitous; they sanction a wrong principle. Can it be right to curse any being, and so to curse him—to curse not only him but his father, his mother, his children, and his whole posterity, for his sin? Indeed, there is no defence to be made of this passage. This *could* not have proceeded from the good and merciful spirit of God. It was the imperfection of David, thus to feel. It was the imperfection of a rude and barbarous age. It belonged to a period of early and erring piety to use such a prayer. And it does not disannul the evidence furnished by other portions of his writings, that the Psalmist derived an inspiration from heaven. Those lofty conceptions of the spirituality and glory of God, and those sacred and transcendent affections which he entertained, considering the period in which he wrote, seem to us, in their intrinsic character, to warrant the claim to more than human teaching. The book of Psalms, as a whole,

appears to us, the more we study it and the age in which it was composed, to bear marks of an elevation and purity that are supernatural. There is nothing more wonderful to us in its character, than that in an age when the universal reliance was on things material, when all the ideas of what is good, and happy, with the world at large, stopped at this point,—that the mind of David should have found its rest, its portion, its all-sufficiency, as it did, in God; that he should, in this noblest respect, have gone so far beyond the prevailing piety of every subsequent age. But we must not dwell upon this subject. Our reverence for the Psalmist is great; but we cannot be blind to the imperfection of such a passage as that which we have cited. When the imprecations of David are next alluded to, we hope there will be some attempt at an explanation of them into accordance with the received ideas of inspiration, or an honest confession of the hopelessness of the task.

We insist upon these instances, more than we should do with any reference that is personal to ourselves or others. They present difficulties, in truth, to the advocates of literal and plenary inspiration which we could wish them fairly to meet.

Our reference to "the differences among the apostles," it is said, is another argument to prove that we are infidels. But do they, we ask again, deny that there *were* differences and disputes among the apostles—differences and disputes in regard to their apostolic conduct and work? Did not Paul upbraid Peter at Antioch, for "not walking uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel;"—for making in fact a false impression in his apostolic character? Did he not "withstand him to the face, because he was to be blamed?" Did not Paul and Barnabas dispute at the

same place, and was not "the contention so sharp that they departed asunder one from the other?"

Then as to "the obscurities of Paul;" on what age of Biblical criticism have we fallen, when it is denied, even by implication, that there are obscurities in Paul; "things hard to be understood?" On what age of common sense, when the mention of these obscurities is set down as confirmatory evidence to sustain the charge of infidelity? And further, if the style he has adopted *is* obscure and hard to be understood, is that style, as mere style, to be commended as anything more than a human composition? Are the words that compose it, either "grammatically or rhetorically the best words?" Still further as to the Scriptural style, the allegation that there are instances of puerility, coarseness and indelicacy, has been referred to as bearing a skeptical aspect. But has any man ever read the Old Testament without finding such instances? To us, they have no more weight, and they furnish no more difficulty, as affecting the question of a divine communication, than the costume of that ancient age. We should as soon think of requiring good breeding or politeness in the writers. Such phraseology belongs to the period, and its absence would take away one mark of truth from the record. But what the advocates of a literal and suggesting inspiration are to do with such instances, it passes our comprehension to devise. We beseech them to consider those instances, —it would be improper to quote them, we dare not refer to the text—and to tell us whether they are ready to pledge the sense and delicacy of Christian men for the propriety of such passages in sacred books or any other books. We warn them, if they do confound the claims of revelation with the defence of such passages, if they dare to present themselves before the searching

and free spirit of this age with such a defence, that they will have something to do with infidelity, besides conjuring up a phantom of it in the faith of their fellow Christians.

Lastly, "inappositeness in illustration." We would ask any man learned in the Scriptures, whether he does not believe that the New Testament exhibits frequent instances of Jewish allegorizing; and whether these instances do not conform to the principles of that mode of illustration; and whether he accounts those principles to have been very strict, or exact, or logical? We will refer our hasty accusers to some of their own authorities. Dr. Woods says, "It is no objection to the inspiration of the Scriptures, that they exhibit all the varieties in the mode of writing that are common in other works." Other works, we suppose he means, of the same period, and indeed he instances under this observation the "allegory." Were the allegories of Jewish "works" always exactly apposite? He maintains, we know, that there is a relevance; but does this amount to an exact appositeness? Bishop Atterbury says, "The language of the East"—and he applies this observation to the Scriptures—"speaks of nothing simply, but in the boldest and most lofty figures and in the longest and most *strained* allegories." Dr. Powell, Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, says, in speaking of the writings of Paul, "Lastly, he abounds with broken sentences, bold figures, and hard, *far-fetched* metaphors."*

We introduce two or three criticisms of Dr. Jahn, on some of the prophets, which we presume no one will call in question. Of Ezekiel, Dr. Jahn says, "His tropes and images do not always exactly correspond with nature;" of Zachariah, "Many novel and

* Dr. Powell's Sermon on Inspiration.

elegant tropes and allegories occur, but they are not always quite in character with the nature of the things from which they are drawn."* Can any critic maintain that there is in the Scriptures an invariable "appositeness of illustration?" If there is, then the language is not, as Dr. Woods admits it is, "completely human," but perfectly divine.

But all this proves, say our reviewers, that "in regard to some portions of the Bible, Unitarians no more believe the *ideas* inspired, than they do the words." Once more, we ask, do *they* believe in the inspiration of every idea that is contained in the Bible? That is the implication conveyed by their words; but do they believe it? Do they believe that the Psalmist was inspired to say, "O daughter of Babylon, thou art to be destroyed. Happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee, as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." Or when Solomon says, "Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts," do they believe that this injunction was inspired? Or when Paul uses this opprobrious language to the officer that struck him, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall!" do they account this to be the fruit of inspiration? "Where," says Jerome, speaking of this angry retort, "where is that patience of our Saviour, who, as a lamb led to the slaughter, opened not his mouth, but answered mildly to him that struck him, "If I have spoken ill convince me of the ill; but if well, why do you strike me?"

Let us take an instance of a different character. Paul says to Timothy, "Demas hath forsaken me having loved this present world, and is departed unto

* Jahn's Introduction to the Old Testament.

Thessalonica, Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring, and the books, especially the parchments." Now can any sensible man believe that these ideas were inspired? We presume not. Well, can any man believe—for this is the only tolerable supposition for our opponents—that Paul was *specially directed* to say these things to Timothy? They may believe so, but to us it seems a most unnecessary exaction upon our faith. We can believe that they were specially directed to state many things, which were derived, not from divine suggestion, but from memory; to state many things that were important as matters of fact and testimony; and that in this, the only possible sense, such things were inspired. But to suppose that Paul was divinely prompted to request that his cloak and books might be brought from Troas, and especially the parchments, looks to us more like an attempt to cast contempt on the doctrine of inspiration than seriously to defend it. We have opened at this moment on a passage of Dr. Woods's Lectures, where he comments on this text. He says to the objector, "I would ask him what reason he has to think that the direction was unimportant either to the comfort and usefulness of Paul, or to the interests of the churches." To the interests of the churches, we suppose he means, *inasmuch* as it promoted Paul's comfort; and we answer, no reason. But is it to be thought that every request or direction of Paul's that concerned his own comfort, and, through that, his usefulness, was a matter of inspiration? We might as well say that when he asked for food at the daily board, he was inspired, as when he asked for clothing on the approach of winter;

for the promise of divine guidance extended, it will not be denied, to what the Apostles spoke, as much as to what they wrote. But to presume that this guidance was given in the minutest affairs of every day convenience and prudence, is not only an extension of the promise wholly unwarranted by the terms of it, as we think, but it is a stretch of inference which shows that the common theory of inspiration presses hard.

For ourselves, we feel no such pressure. Our minds are so much at ease in this argument, that we are ready to throw the little ball we have just been winding up, to our neighbours, for their further amusement. We cannot help referring those—we mean not the author we have just quoted—but those who are so fond of running out parallels between Unitarians and Infidels, who have lately studied so hard upon "Bolinbroke, Hobbes, Tindal, Morgan, Dodwell and Gibbon," —referring them, we say, for it must cost a good deal of labour to hunt up so many references on both sides, to the new instances we have just given them, to be added to their useful catalogue. We warrant that Bolinbroke, Hobbes, Tindal, Morgan, Dodwell or Gibbon, or, perhaps, Paine, have quoted the same passages in objecting to Christianity, that we have quoted in objecting to the Orthodox views of inspiration. What a notable argument is it, and what notable minds must it be expected to operate upon! Unitarians believe some things that Infidels believe, and use some of the same methods of reasoning; therefore Unitarians are Infidels! But let us try a different application of this favourite argument, and see how it will stand. Orthodox persons believe in a Providence; so do many Infidels, therefore the Orthodox are Infidels. The Trinitarians have departed from the simple unity of God, and conceive of three distinct

principles, each of which is God; so did Plato; therefore Trinitarians are Platonists; they have forsaken Christianity, and, shocking to relate! have gone back to Heathenism. Calvinists decry human nature; so did the French philosophers; therefore Calvinists are Infidel philosophers. They are Necessitarians too; so were some of the ancient philosophers; and therefore, their system is a strange mixture of ancient and modern skepticism. The parallel might proceed, and thus it would be. "Nay, but we make distinctions," these several sects would say. We cannot help it: we do not see them; these meshes of sophistry are all broken and crushed before the step of this "mighty and grinding dispensation" under which we are fighting the battle for truth. "Well, but we profess to be Christians." Ay, profess; no doubt you profess. That furthers your purposes for a while; you are "Infidels in disguise;" you are on the way to a disclosure; and "the sooner you come out," the better. "Ah," our opponents will say, with a serious face after all, "but can you shut your eyes to the great, historical fact, that some of the German theologians, a few years ago, speculated on some points as you do; and that they have now become Infidels?" The Catholic shall answer for us. "Can you, Calvinistic Protestants, shut your eyes to the great, historical fact, that, but fifty years ago the German theologians speculated in all respects as you do, unless that they speculated less freely, and that now, some of them are Infidels, and many of them Unitarians, and that almost all deny the Scriptural obligation of the Sabbath, the eternity of future punishments, and hold the Old Testament to to be of authority inferior to that of the New?* This

* We wish, indeed, that those whose imaginations are so possessed with the resemblance which we bear to the Liberal Party in Ger-

is what we told Luther and his coadjutors long ago—told them so at the time. We told them, that they were plunging themselves, or their successors, at any rate, into infidelity. Nay, Holy Church deems but little better of you now, than that you are Infidels! It holds you outcasts from faith and hope; and it ill becomes you to protest against this exclusion, so long as you are dealing out the whole measure of its severity against those who differ from you." We commend the argument of the Catholic to those whom it may concern, and return to our discussion; only saying, as we pass, that the Catholic Doctors have more ground than they think for, to support the sophism by which they claim Protestant Christians as belonging to the one infallible and undivided church. Protestant Christians do indeed exhibit too many proofs of belonging to it; and this we say, not in the spirit of sarcasm, but of sober and sad reflection.

It is time to ask—since the term is so vaguely used and for such purposes—What is Infidelity? Let the modern Orthodox luminaries of Germany, Storr and Flatt, answer for us; for they answer wisely and with discrimination. "The question," say they, "is not, Shall we believe the doctrines of Jesus under the same conditions that we believe the declarations of any other

many; who have rung all the changes of argument, warning, and scarcasm, upon it, till we should think it could scarcely yield another note; we wish that they would look at the state of the *Orthodox* Party in that country. How easy would it be for us, if we were disposed to practise this lately perfected art of *scizing occasions*, to wage this petty war of comparisons, and allusions, and insinuations; to address ourselves, not to the reflections, but to the imagination of the people; how easy to retort, and to spread a vague horror against half of the Orthodox clergy of New England! But do we live at a period when there is no discrimination? Is the learning of Germany, with its hasty, though monstrous growth, to deter all the world from inquiry?

teacher, namely, provided our reason discovers them to be true; but the question is, Shall we believe the instructions of Jesus, under circumstances in which we would not believe any other teacher, who was not under the special influence of God. It is useless to speak of a *revelation*, if we attribute to Jesus no other inspiration than that what the Naturalist will attribute to him, and which may just as well be attributed to the Koran, and to every other pretended revelation; nay, to all teachers of religion; that is, if we receive only those doctrines, whose truth is manifest to the eye of reason, and call them divine only because all truth is derived from God, the author of our reason."* It is in this vague sense that some Infidels have called the Scriptures divine; that Bolingbroke has denominated them "the word of God," and that Rousseau has seemed to acknowledge so much, in those eloquent testimonies of his, to the beauty of the Scriptures and of our Saviour's character, which put the coldness of many Christian teachers to shame. But now let the question be fairly stated;—Does, or did, any Infidel ever admit the divine, supernatural, miraculous origin of that system of interpositions and instructions, that is recorded in the Bible? And was anything ever heard of, in all the annals of theological extravagance, more monstrous, than to charge men, who devoutly and gratefully profess to receive the Bible in this supernatural character, with being Infidels?

Let not our brethren in the Christian faith be shaken from their steadfastness, by this senseless cry, or the vague horror which it is designed to spread abroad among the people. Let them examine the glorious temple of their faith, too clear in their perceptions, too strong in their admiration, to be disturbed by the slight

* Bibl. Theol. § 16. II. 3.

appendages which the tastes and styles of different ages have gathered around it. Let them study the sublime and precious record of heaven-inspired truth, with a freedom, with a faith, with a feeling, that standeth not in the letter, but in the spirit.

We cannot think it a hard case to be classed in our faith on this subject, with such men as Grotius and Erasmus, with Paley and Burnet. And we are really curious to know, we wish that our accusers would tell us, what they are to do with such men. Erasmus and Grotius, Burnet and Paley Infidels! It is indeed a discovery in the Christian world.

We shall now take up a few moments in making some further references of this nature; for it is time, as we have already said, to refer to some of the most able defenders of our faith, and to inquire whether their names, too, are to fall under this newly devised opprobrium.

St. Jerome says, "The Prophet Amos was skilled in knowledge, not in language." And then in a comment on the third chapter he adds, "We told you that he uses the terms of his own profession, and because a shepherd knows nothing more terrible than a lion, he compares the anger of God to lions." Did not Jerome, then, regard the language as "purely human?" Did he regard it as "rhetorically the best language?"

The learned Le Clerc, whose writings occupy a distinguished place in all our theological libraries, says, with a latitude of expression, indeed, beyond what we should use—"Thus, then, according to my hypothesis, the authority of the Scripture continues in full force. For you see, I maintain, that we are obliged to believe the substance of the history of the New Testament, and generally, all the doctrines of Jesus Christ, all that was inspired to the Apostles, and also whatsoever they

have said of themselves, so far as it is conformable to our Saviour's doctrine and to right reason. It is plain that nothing farther is necessarily to be believed in order to salvation. And it seems also evident to me, that those new opinions brought into the Christian religion since the death of the Apostles, which I have here refuted, being altogether imaginary and ungrounded, instead of bringing any advantage to the Christian religion, are really very prejudicial to it. An inspiration is attributed to the Apostles, to which they never pretended, and whereof there is not the least mark left in their writings. Hereupon it happens, that very many persons who have strength enough of understanding to deny assent to a thing for which there is no good proof brought—though preached with never so much gravity—it happens, I say, that these persons reject all the Christian religion, because they do not distinguish true Christianity from those dreams of fanciful divines."*

For the opinion that we are to look to the substance of the Scriptures, and not to the letter—not to every exact mode of phraseology, let us see what countenance we have from Dr. Lightfoot, by universal consent allowed to be one of the most learned and eminent men in the English Church. After saying that the evangelists and apostles used the Greek versions of the Old Testament in their quotations from it, he speaks of that version in the following terms:—"I question not but the interpreters (the LXX,) whoever they were, engaged themselves in this undertaking (the translation of the Old Testament,) with something of a partial mind, and as they made no great conscience of imposing on the Gentiles, so they made it their religion to favour their own side; and,

* Essay on Inspiration.

according to this ill temperament and disposition of mind, so did they manage their version, either adding or curtailing at pleasure, blindly, lazily, and audaciously enough; sometimes giving a very foreign sense, sometimes a contrary, oftentimes none; and this frequently to patronise their own traditions, or to avoid some offence they think might be in the original, or for the credit and safety of their own nation. The tokens of all which, it would not be difficult to instance in very great numbers, would I apply myself to it."* Now admitting all, or anything of this to be true, is it possible to suppose that the apostles held the authority of the Scriptures, as is now done, to depend on their verbal accuracy? There is reason, indeed, with Le Clerc, to denominate these views of inspiration, "new opinions brought into the church since the death of the apostles."

But our present business is with authorities. Bishop Atterbury, in his sermon on 2 Peter iii. 16, writes thus:— "For consider we with ourselves, what manner of men the apostles were in their birth and education, what country they lived in, what language they wrote in; and we shall find it rather wonderful that there are so few, than that there are so many things that we are at a loss to understand. They were men (all except Paul) meanly born and bred, and uninstructed utterly in the arts of speaking and writing. All the language they were masters of, was purely what was necessary to express themselves upon the common affairs of life, and in matters of intercourse with men of their own rank and profession. When they came, therefore, to talk of the great doctrines of the cross, to preach up the astonishing truths of the Gospel, they brought, to be sure, their old idiotisms [idioms] and

* Vol. II., p. 401.

plainness of speech along with them. And is it strange, then, that the deep things of God should not always be expressed by them in words of the greatest propriety and clearness?"

Bishop Chandler says, speaking of Paul's reasonings on certain points, "In all this he saith no more than that the *subject* of his mystical reasons, as they relate to Christ, was taught them by the Spirit; the *doctrines* were *divine;* yet the *means* and *topics*, from whence they were sometimes urged and confirmed, were *human.*"

The following observations from Locke's Essay on the Understanding of St. Paul's Epistles, we presume no judicious critic will gainsay, and we see not how the inference is to be rejected, that the manner and style were altogether his own, and purely human, and plainly imperfect.

"To these causes of obscurity common to St. Paul with most of the other penmen of the several books of the New Testament, we may add those that are peculiarly his, and owing to his style and temper. He was, as it is visible, a man of quick thought, warm temper, mighty well versed in the writings of the Old Testament, and full of the doctrine of the New: all this put together, suggested matter to him in abundance on those subjects that came in his way; so that one may consider him, when he was writing, as beset with a crowd of thoughts, all striving for utterance. In this posture of mind it was almost impossible for him to keep that slow pace, and observe minutely that order and method of ranging all that he said, from which results an easy and obvious perspicuity. To this plenty and vehemence of his may be imputed many of those large parentheses, which a careful reader may observe in his Epistles. Upon this ac-

count, also, it is that he often breaks off, in the middle of an argument, to let in some new thought suggested by his own words; which having pursued and explained as far as conduced to his present purpose, he reassumes again the thread of his discourse, and goes on with it, without taking any notice that he returns again to what he had been before saying; though sometimes it be so far off that it may well have slipt out of his mind, and requires a very attentive reader to observe, and so bring the disjointed members together as to make up the connexion, and see how the scattered parts of the discourse hang together in a coherent well-agreeing sense, that makes it all of a piece."

We should not proceed with these quotations merely for our own defence; but we think they deserve attention on their own account, upon a subject so little understood, and so likely to attract further notice, as the character in which the Scriptures are to be received as containing a revelation from God. We shall therefore make one or two extracts from Bishop Burnet and Dr. Paley, in addition to those given in a former article.

In his Exposition of the Thirty nine Articles, Bishop Burnet thus writes: "And thus far I have laid down such a scheme concerning inspiration and inspired writings, as will afford, to such as apprehend it aright, a solution to most of these difficulties with which we are urged on the account of some passages in the sacred writings. The laying down a scheme that asserts an immediate inspiration which goes to the style and to every tittle, and that denies any error to have crept into any of the copies, as it seems on the one hand to raise the honour of the Scriptures very highly, so it lies open, on the other hand, to great difficul

ties, which seem insuperable in that hypothesis; whereas a middle way, as it settles the divine inspiration of these writings, and their being continued down genuine and unvitiated to us, as to all that, for which we can only suppose that inspiration was given; so it helps us more easily out of all difficulties, by *yielding* that which serves to answer them, without weakening the authority of the whole."*

We give an extract from Dr. Paley's chapter on Erroneous Opinions imputed to the Apostles, referring our readers, who would learn his views in detail, to the whole chapter. "We do not usually question the credit of a writer, by reason of any opinion he may have delivered upon subjects unconnected with his evidence; and even upon subjects connected with his account, or mixed with it in the same discourse or writing, we naturally separate facts from opinions, testimony from observation, narrative from argument.

"To apply this equitable consideration to the Christian records, much controversy, and much objection has been raised concerning the quotations of the Old Testament found in the New; some of which quotations, it is said, are applied in a sense, and to events, apparently different from that which they bear, and from those to which they belong, in the original. It is probable, to my apprehension, that many of those quotations were intended by the writers of the New Testament as nothing more than *accommodations*. Such accommodations of passages from old authors are common with writers of all countries; but in none perhaps were more to be expected, than in the writings of the Jews, whose literature was almost entirely confined to their Scriptures." "Those prophecies which are alleged with more solemnity, and which are ac-

* P. 88, 2d fol. edition, 1700.

companied with a precise declaration that they originally respected the event then related, are, I think, truly alleged. But were it otherwise, is the judgment of the writers of the New Testament, in interpreting passages of the Old, or sometimes perhaps in receiving established interpretations, so connected either with their veracity, or with their means of information concerning what was passing in their own times, as that a critical mistake, even were it more clearly made out, should overthrow their historical credit? Does it diminish it? Has it anything to do with it?"*

It is well known that the doctrine of inspiration has been exceedingly modified by the progress of biblical criticism, within the last half century. To this purpose we quote Jahn, in reference to the prevailing state of opinion in Germany. "Most of the Protestants formed a very strict idea of inspiration, and defended it as late as the middle of the eighteenth century. But after the publication of the learned work of Toellner on inspiration, in 1772, and of Semler's examination of the Canon, 1771–3, many undertook to investigate the doctrine of inspiration, and gradually relaxed in their views of it, until at last they entirely banished the doctrine, so that at present but few admit it."†

It would not be difficult to prove that there has been a similar, though not an equal, nor equally extended, progress of opinion in England. We have in a former article referred to Dr. Powell and Bishop Marsh.

Dr. Durell, Principal of Hertford College, Oxford, and Prebendary of Canterbury, said long ago, in speaking of the imprecations sometimes occurring in the Psalms,—"How far it may be proper to continue the reading of these Psalms in the daily service of our

* Evidences, Part iii. chap. ii.
† Introduction to the Old Testament, §23

church, I leave to the consideration of the legislature to determine. A Christian of erudition may consider these *imprecations* only as the natural sentiments of *Jews*, which the benign religion he professes, abhors and condemns. But what are the illiterate to do, who know not whence to draw the line between the Law and the Gospel? They hear both read one after the other, and, I fear, think them both of equal obligation, and even take shelter under scripture to cover their curses. Though I am conscious I here tread on slippery ground, I will take leave to hint, that, notwithstanding the high antiquity that sanctifies, as it were, this practice, it would, in the opinion of *a number of wise and good men*, be more for the credit of the Christian church, to omit a few of those Psalms, and substitute some parts of the Gospel in their stead."

Speaking of Paul's manner of writing in his Epistles, Bishop Marsh says, "The erudition there displayed, is the erudition of a learned Jew. The argumentation there displayed, is the argumentation of a Jewish convert to Christianity, confuting his brethren on their own ground."

Still more strongly, Dr. Maltby, late preacher at Lincoln's Inn, in his Sermons;—"Whatsoever doctrines connected with revelation, are clearly discoverable in the writings of St. Paul, we receive with reverence and faith, as the will of God. But let us beware how we misunderstand the meaning of a writer, whose meaning from so many causes may be misunderstood. Let us discriminate when he is addressing his adversaries as a logician, and when he unequivocally expresses his own personal conviction."*

The Quarterly Review, which has been considered as representing the sentiments of the English Church,

* Maltby's Sermons, Vol. I. p. 311.

in an article on Professor Buckland's '*Reliquiæ Diluvianæ*,' uses the following language. Addressing the friends of religion, it says—"We would call to their recollection, also, the opinions formerly maintained, as to the plenary and even literal inspiration of Scripture; the clamour raised against the first collections of various readings, in the copies of the New Testament, and still later against those of the Old.

"Well indeed is it for us that the cause of revelation does not depend on questions such as these; for it is remarkable that in every instance the controversy has ended in the gradual surrender of those very points, which were at one time represented as involving the vital interests of religion."*

But we have wearied ourselves, and our readers we fear, with quotations. And truly what need of authorities? Let us quote Paul himself. So personal, so private many times, so peculiar always, so mixing up his natural feelings and interests with the ministration of the Gospel, that one of the charms of his writings, is the charm of his own noble generosity and artlessness—how is it possible to think of him, in many of these passages, but as giving utterance to feelings entirely natural, in words and arguments purely human! Let us quote Paul, we say; and we may take a passage almost at random, and leave it to the judgment of our readers. "Am I not an Apostle? Am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are ye not my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. Mine answer to them that do examine me is this; Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as

* Quarterly Review, No. LXVII. p. 142.

the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have we not power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?"*

We shall now leave the charge of infidelity, and shall enter upon a brief consideration of the Lectures which we have placed at the head of this article. We feel, in doing so, that we are breathing a new atmosphere, that we are passing from storm to sunshine, from a cloudy region to clearer light; and truly if we are to fall in any contest, we had rather be stricken down by the sunbeam, than by a driving mist. We see in these Lectures the same fine and cautious discrimination, for which we have long considered Dr. Woods as distinguished, and which, we believe, would render him eminent in any church; and though he has not cleared up our difficulties, though he has not, indeed, grappled with the difficulties that most press upon our own minds, yet, if we are wrong, we certainly should be more likely to be reclaimed, by his discriminating arguments, than by violent anathemas and wholesale denunciations. When will Christian controversialists approach but so distantly to the kindliness of our common faith, as to recognise the claims of common humanity, and to pay any tolerable respect to the sincerity and worth of their opponents!

We understand Dr. Woods. We know that he is no temporizer. We hear him speak of dangers. Perhaps we admit that there are dangers; perhaps we feel it; perhaps we pray for light and safety, and fear lest we should stretch out a rash hand to the ark of God to save it from the hands of the Philistines. All

* Cor. ix. 1—7.

this may be; for when or where was the speculative or moral path, of any human being free from dangers?

Dr. Woods commences with "remarks on the proper mode of reasoning, and on the nature and source of the evidence, by which divine inspiration is to be proved." In the course of these remarks, he introduces with approbation a passage from Dr. Knapp, which, as containing some important discriminations, we will quote. "These two positions; *the contents of the sacred books, or the doctrines taught in them, are of divine origin;* and *the books themselves are given by inspiration of God,* are not the same but need to be carefully distinguished. It does not follow from the arguments which prove the doctrines of the Scriptures to be divine, that the books themselves were written under a divine impulse. A revealed truth may be taught in any book; but it does not follow that the book itself is divine. We might be convinced of the truth and divinity of the Christian religion, from the mere genuineness of the books of the New Testament and the credibility of their authors. The divinity of the Christian religion can therefore be conceived, independently of the inspiration of the Bible. This distinction was made as early as the time of Melancthon."

On this passage we have two remarks to offer. In the first place, according to the obvious distinction here adopted by Dr. Woods, we could take refuge within the pale of Christianity, even though we believed much less than we do. In the second place, believing *as* we do, we have no difficulty in admitting the doctrine of inspiration in the general terms here laid down.

We do indeed differ from the author of the Lectures when he goes into detail. We believe that the truths

of our religion were inspired, and that the teachers of our religion were divinely directed and assisted to communicate them; but we cannot see that such an inspiration is, or need be, a pledge for the perfect accuracy or correctness of every word they wrote, or of every illustration or argument by which they enforced their message.

But this brings us to the question; and on this question Dr. Woods lays down the following, and only safe, rule, and, as we may venture hereafter to remind him, the *only* rule. "The single argument," he says, "on which I propose to rest the doctrine of inspiration, is *the testimony of the sacred writers themselves.*"

With this rule before him, and after clearing the way to his main subject by several qualifications, to which we shall soon have occasion to refer, Dr. Woods adduces arguments for the inspiration, first of the Old, and then of the New Testament. And we confess, that, if we did not read the illustrations of his arguments, or if we were not aware beforehand that our views differed from his—that if we took his arguments just as they stand in their simple statement, we should never suspect that they were designed to establish a position different from that in which we ourselves stand.

The first argument, of course, for the inspiration of the Old Testament, is from the passages—"For the prophecy came not in old times by the will of man, but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,"* and "All scripture is given by inspiration of God."† Now, not to insist upon learned or minute criticisms on these passages, from which we certainly think we should derive some advantages in the argument, let them be taken for all that they can reasonably be supposed to mean, or that, without straining

* 2 Peter i. 21. † Tim. iii. 16.

them, they can mean at all. "Prophecy" and "all Scripture" refer to the Old Testament as a whole, as a collection of writings; and those writings had a divine and supernatural origin. They had a higher origin than the will of man. They form a body of divine communications; they are the authorised records of a divine religion. Such a commentary surely satisfies the obvious meaning of these passages. But can it be inferred that Peter and Paul, when they use this language, intend to claim every sentence and phrase as of divine inspiration? These passages are precisely like those general declarations which we constantly make about the general character of books, when we have no intention to embrace every minute particular. We give a meaning to those texts, then, a very natural and a most important meaning, without involving ourselves in what seems to us the inextricable difficulties of defending every word in the Old Testament. Storr and Flatt say, in commenting on the passage in Timothy, "It is certain from the declarations of the apostle Paul, that those books are in such a sense inspired and given by God, that they are to be regarded as of divine authority; and for this reason they are entitled to credence. And this is the precise idea of divine inspiration, which, in the days of Timothy, was instilled into the minds of all the Jews from their earliest infancy." What Josephus says of the Jewish faith in their Scriptures, we are perfectly ready to assent to; that they "esteem these books to contain divine doctrines," and he says nothing stronger in the whole passage,* to which the German theologians, just quoted, refer.—But even if it were admitted that the texts in question mean all that they can mean—that the words, "prophecy," and "all Scripture," mean

* Against Apaion, Bk I. 8

every truth, every idea, contained in the Old Testament, still it would not follow that those "holy men" were indebted for their style, or for any direction of their style, to inspiration.

Dr. Woods's "next argument to prove the inspiration of the Old Testament scriptures, is, that Christ and his apostles treat them as possessing an authority entirely different from that of any other writings." To this we give entire assent; and we yield to the inference so far as we think it can fairly go. But that it goes to the sanctioning of every word or idea in those scriptures, we cannot see reason to admit. Without attributing to them any such perfection, they possess to our minds just such an authority; that is to say, an "authority entirely different from that of any other writings," and this must to us, of course, be a decisive consideration.

The arguments which Dr. Woods uses to prove the inspiration of the New Testament, are the following. First, "that Christ, who had all power in heaven and earth, commissioned his apostles to act in his stead, as teachers of the Christian religion, and confirmed their authority by miracles;" secondly, that "Christ expressly promised to give his apostles the Holy Spirit to assist them in their work;" and thirdly, "that there are many passages in the New Testament to show, that the writers considered themselves to be under the infallible guidance of the Spirit, and their instructions to be clothed with divine authority."

Now we wish not to seem perverse or paradoxical to any one, certainly not to an author whose reasoning powers we greatly respect; but it appears to us that we can admit all these propositions, and we have no doubt, indeed, of their truth, without coming to the *conclusion* to which Dr. Woods would guide us. We

believe that Jesus authorised the apostles to teach his religion, that he promised them special aid, and that they considered themselves as teaching the great truths of his religion under a guidance which, with reference to those truths, was infallible; that they considered their instructions as clothed with divine authority; and yet, to the accomplishment of all this, to the *bare making of the communication*, we cannot perceive it to be necessary that there should have been any constant and miraculous interference with the natural operations of their own minds—any supernatural guardianship over their reasonings about the truths they were to deliver, or over their illustrations of it, over their comparisons, figures, or their phrases.

He who maintains that inspiration does extend to these things, should bring express proof; should bring "the testimony of the writers themselves." Now here it is, to our minds, that the argument of Dr. Woods is essentially deficient. It is a negative argument; and a negative argument, certainly, against the strongest positive presumption. The sacred writers say, that they were directed to make the communication, that they were commissioned to preach the Gospel; but here their testimony ends. They do not say that they were, or would be, directed minutely in every phrase, figure, and illustration, *how* to preach it. On the contrary, they preach in a manner, to all appearance, perfectly natural to them. They preach as occasions arise, and their writings are mostly called forth by exigencies of trial and danger in the state of the churches. And, therefore, the presumption is against the extension of inspiration contended for.

We are aware, indeed, that Dr. Woods insists, that "as the writers of Scripture nowhere limit the divine influence which they enjoyed, to the thoughts or con-

ceptions of their own minds," so neither should we. But can this canon of interpretation be supported? God's interposition in aid of human virtue, is taught without any express limit. Is there, therefore, no limit? Does this interposition extend to the immediate and miraculous control or guidance of all holy affections? So men are said to be inspired to teach the truth. But can it be fairly argued from thence, that the inspiring influence extends, beyond the truths revealed, to the words of the communication. Besides, if there were *no* limit, then there must have been an instant suggestion or prompting of every word, and the sacred writer must have been the mere amanuensis or secretary, so to speak, of the inspiring influence. Does Dr. Woods believe this? We presume not; since he allows that the inspired writers "use their own style," and only maintains that they are "under such direction," as "certainly to be secured against all mistakes."

The truth is, undeniably, that the act of composition, the act of selecting words in a sentence, is as necessarily free, as much the writer's own act, as the act of choosing right from wrong. The very business of writing or speaking, therefore, implies all the limitation we contend for. A man may write, indeed, from verbal memory, or from an express dictation of words, and this is a different case; and we deny not that a portion of the Scriptures fall under this condition. Some of the prophesies, that is, some sentences, may have been written from express dictation. A portion of the discourses of our Saviour were undoubtedly written from an exact remembrance of the words. And yet it is easy to see that this recollection often extends only to the sense. The words vary; and it is a remark to which we invite particular attention, that they vary according to the style of each particular

writer. John is repetitious: and the discourses of Jesus under his report, though everywhere showing the same great and unequalled Master, take something of the form of his peculiar style. The introductory phrase, "Verily I say unto you," has the adverb repeated in John—"Verily, *verily*, I say unto you." The repetition never occurs in the other evangelists; in John, it is constant and habitual. And in short, if any one would understand how strong is the aspect of naturalness in all their writings, and of peculiarity in each individual writer, we would ask him to read the writings themselves—not to reason about what must be, or ought to be, but to read the writings themselves. He would rise from this perusal with an argument stronger than we can express, against the doctrine of verbal inspiration, or of special guidance in regard to the style of writing, and modes of illustration.

To us it is singular that Dr. Woods admits the whole force of this presumption, and yet denies the inference. In truth, we know not what he might not admit, and yet, with the mode of reasoning he adopts, maintain his theory. He might admit, that the Bible is full of the evidences of human imperfection, that it is full of mistakes in style, in figures, in illustration, and yet maintain, to use his cautious phraseology, that the Bible is "just what God saw to be suited to the ends of revelation." Why, the conclusion is one which we have no difficulty of admitting on our own principles. It was best that the communication should be left to be made just as it was made.

But let us see what Dr. Woods does admit; and we must confess, too, our honest surprise at the main and leading answer which he makes to his own concessions. He admits, what it has been thought so great an offence in us to assert, that "the language is completely

human." He admits, that "in writing the Scriptures, the sacred penmen evidently made use of their own faculties; that "the language employed by the inspired writers exhibits no marks of a divine interference, but is perfectly conformed to the genius and taste of the writers," and that "even the same doctrine is taught, and the same event described, in a different manner by different writers." And his constant answer is—Very well; why not?—Why should not the writers compose, each one, in his own style and manner? Why should they not, indeed, we say; but is this the proper answer to the objection? The objection is, that the style is natural, and therefore is not supernatural. The answer, admitting as it does the first quality, should show how the style can possess the other; or, in other words, how the same style could have been formed under influences at the same time natural and supernatural.

Dr. Woods does indeed say, "Is it not evident that God may exercise a perfect superintendency over inspired writers as to the language they shall use, and yet that each one of them shall write in his own style, and in all respects according to his own taste?" That is to say, is it not evident, that the thoughts may be perfectly free, and yet in their freedom, be perfectly controlled by an influence extraneous and foreign to them? To which we must answer; No, certainly, it is not *evident*, even if it can be true. If it is evident, we wish that the Divinity Professor had shown it. We wish that he had taken us into that mysterious region, and disclosed to us the human mind acting freely under a control so absolute as *to secure the perfect accuracy of its operations!* No man better than Dr. Woods knows the way to this region, if there is any, or better knows there is no way.

Will he, then, approach it by analogies? Every analogy, we think, is fatal to his position. We quote a sentence from him, which he introduces in this connexion, and which, we think, is singularly unfortunate for his argument. "The great variety," he says, "existing among men as to their rational talents and their peculiar manner of thinking and writing, may, in this way, be turned to account in the work of revelation, as well as in the concerns of common life." But have men any infallible direction in the common concerns of life? Or in the spiritual concerns of the soul, have they any? And yet in both, divine aid is promised to the faithful, and promised without any limit. Till, therefore, some stronger proof is brought than the general promise of aid and guidance in teaching revealed truths, we cannot admit, against all the evidence that appears on the face of the record, that this guidance extended to the very form and phraseology of the communication. The nature of the action itself furnishes a limit.

"But," it will be said, "this infallible guidance in the mode of teaching, is necessary to insure to us a sufficient and satisfactory communication." This, we cannot doubt, as we have said in a former article, is the great difficulty. "Give us a perfect book," we believe would be the language of our opponents, "and we care not how it was made." But is it right to make any *a priori* demand of this sort? We should rather say, "Give us a glorious and unquestionable communication, and we are not solicitous as to the manner of it." We do say,—"Give us such a communication as it has pleased God to make, and we are satisfied." We would place ourselves reverently before the shrine, not to call in question its form, or the materials of which it is composed, but to listen to

the voice that proceeds from it. We would listen to the oracle, not to criticise the tone in which it speaks, but to gather the import of what it utters. Let us drink of the "waters of life," and we complain not if they are brought to us in "earthen vessels."

But let us hear the objection. Upon the supposition, that "as far as language is concerned, the writers were left entirely to their own judgment and fidelity," Dr. Woods says, "Here," we might say, "Paul was unfortunate in the choice of words; and here his language does not express the ideas he must have intended to convey. Here the style of John was inadvertent; and here it was faulty; and here it would have been more agreeable to the nature of the subject, and would have more accurately expressed the truth, had it been altered thus." But how seldom should we find occasion to say this! How seldom *do* we find occasion! If a communication made by human hands, must needs be so precarious and uncertain, why does not this skepticism appear in our commentaries and our controversies? Why does it not extend to all other books? Why are we not in constant and grievous uncertainty about the meaning of our familiar authors, because they have not had the aid of inspiration to form or modify their style?

Why also do we not find it difficult to distinguish between the point which they labour to prove, and the illustrations and arguments which they bring to bear upon it? Let any one look into the writings of Paul or John, and satisfy himself, as we think he easily may, that there is no difficulty whatever in separating what he teaches on his apostolic authority, and what he puts forth in the shape of argument addressed to the reason of his readers.

The truth is, after all, we are inclined to believe,

that the different views taken of this point, arise from the different views that are entertained of the substance of the communication. If we believed that the New Testament contained a fine, extended, philosophical, or metaphysical theory, we might be anxious for the infallibility of every phrase and word. But even then our anxiety would be hypercritical. The works of Aristotle and Kant need no such pledge in order to satisfy the student that he understands their principles. How much less is this pledge necessary to satisfy us as to a few great facts, doctrines, and principles,—all practical, all so plain that he "who runs may read," all designed for the comprehension of the poor, the ignorant, and unlearned! And how is it possible for our opponents, on their principles, to rely as they do, on uninspired translations of the sacred text? How can they send out imperfect translations and detached books of this volume, as they do to the heathen! Nay, if the infallibility of every sentence and word is so essential to the validity of the communication, all men must be learned, before they can be put in a proper condition to receive it. Neither would this help them; for the learned differ as much as others. Infallible sentences avail nothing without infallible interpreters; and these we cannot have. And while the learned thus differ, as they always have and always will, what reliance can there be for the body of Christians, but on the substance of the communication; what reliance, in fact, that is satisfactory, but upon those views of inspiration which we maintain?

On this subject of the sacred style, we must beg our readers to have patience with us a moment longer. We have said in a former article, that human language is, from its nature, essentially fallible; and it does appear to us, that if this point were fully considered, it would

settle the whole question about infallibility in the *words* of this communication. All human language, when referring to what is intellectual, to what is spiritual, is but an approximation to the truth. Words are conventional signs of thought. They are not pictures, and if they were, they could be pictures only of external objects. They are symbols, and they bear no relation to our intellectual conceptions, but what they bear by common agreement. Now this point we press. Was this agreement ever, in any age or country, perfect and invariable? Were there ever two persons, to whom words expressive of spiritual qualities—to whom the same words, though purporting the same things in substance, did not bear different degrees and shades of meaning? How then can the idea of absolute infallibility be attached to such an instrument of communication?

Suppose, for example, that a revelation were now made to us in the English language. It is perfectly evident, on the one hand, that so far as the matters of that revelation were simple and practical, it would convey to us all, substantially the same general ideas. Such our Scriptures do convey to all who read them, even though they come through the medium of a translation; for it is to be kept in mind, that we have only a human translation, and all this question about verbal inspiration neither avails nor concerns anybody but the learned; a fact of itself sufficient to show that the validity and authority of a revelation designed for all nations, *cannot* depend on verbal inspiration. But to return;—we say, on the one hand, that from an inspired communication in our own language, all would receive the same *general* ideas. The substance of the communication, if it were an intelligible one, could not escape them, on a diligent reading: and this would be

cient for their moral instruction and improvement. on the other hand, it is equally evident that the ient they went into the minutiæ of meaning, the ient especially that they went into matters of ulation, there would be shades of difference in their eptions. For what would they have to do in this particular, definite investigation? They would to become critics. They must resort to their onaries. And what would they find there? Some ls with ten, some twenty, some forty meanings. at principle could they possibly adopt, that would them to an unerring and uniform selection? What iple would enable them to determine the precise e of thought which one word receives from its exion with another? There is none; there never been any to the most honest and faithful inter- rs who read the Scriptures in their original lan- es; and all this solicitude about the perfect verbal racy, the verbal authority of the Bible, in our hension, is as useless as it is unphilosophical.

t no one say, "The question is not about words. ed it *is* about words. It is about the vehicle of nunication, about style, about the manner of ng. The mode of communication is the point in te; and this includes phraseology, figures, meta- , illustrations, allegories, arguments. The ques- is,—Did the inspired teachers take the body of e truth communicated to them, and then faithfully d, but naturally, humanly, in the free and rced exercise of their own faculties, deliver that d truth—or, were they so controlled or con- ned, or supernaturally guarded, in this work, that r sentence they delivered is intrinsically, philo- ically, divinely accurate and infallible?

d it is a most important question. To us, at

least, with our views, it is one of inexpressible interest. For it is with such an interest that we cherish our belief in the Scriptures as containing a divine revelation. It is with the deepest solicitude, therefore, that we have long pondered this question. The conviction has been forced on our minds that we could not, in any fairness or impartiality, ascribe to the Scriptures, that kind of verbal, illustrative, or logical perfection, which by many is claimed for them, and we have felt unspeakable relief in the conclusion, that it is not at all necessary to their character as authorized records of a communication from Heaven. If others entertain a different opinion, we complain not—nay, we rejoice for them, in this, that they stand "upon the foundation," though fencing themselves around with barriers that seem to us to be needless. And we hope that they will not be very much displeased that *we*, too, feel the "rock of our salvation" to be strong and secure beneath us.

There may be skeptics, cold or contemptuous enough to look with indifference or with scorn upon this transcendent, this all-inspiring interest which we feel in the spiritual objects, and hopes, and destinies of our existence. They may think "this intellectual being" too poor a thing to be the subject of such wide contemplation, and of such intense and overpowering concern. Yet, what avails the feeble hand that would repress and bind down the very laws of our nature? Still the thought, the feeling, the desire invincible and immortal springs within us, and craves its proper, satisfying, soul-sufficing good. No created might on earth is like the energy of that inward and undying want; no earthly blessing is like that which supplies it; and no sigh of human despondency could be so mournful *as that* with which we should sink from the holy light

that cheers us. We stand amidst erring creatures, ourselves clothed with imperfection and conscious of sin, and the vision of perfect truth and perfect beauty and saving goodness in the person of Jesus, is "a light come into the world" that would otherwise be dark to us. We stand amidst shadows and mysteries, amidst trials and sufferings; and the revelation of a gracious and pitying Father in Heaven is strength, assurance, consolation, which nothing else can give. We stand upon "this shore of time"—the beloved, the cherished, the hallowed in our sorrows, have gone from us; and the Gospel that bringeth immortality to light, that places them in immortal regions, and invites us thither, is a message sufficient to bear us in rapture through the very shadows of death. Tell us that "God hath spoken" all this to us; and we cannot question the manner, we cannot be solicitous about the words; we can only "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

ON FAITH, AND JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned.—Mark xvi. 16.

I HAVE translated the last word in the text "condemned" in conformity with the best English versions and all the foreign ones, and with the undoubted sense of the original; but the change does not materially alter the meaning of the passage. I think it best to relieve the text from a word, which, from its association with the language of the profane, shocks us: but still this passage teaches us undoubtedly, that with faith are connected God's favour, and our safety and happiness; and with unbelief, condemnation, rejection of heaven, and the soul's perdition. What now is to be understood by this faith and this unbelief? And what is meant when it is said that the one justifies, and the other condemns us?

I have no doubt that many persons have been surprised at the importance given to these acts or states of mind, in the New Testament. And certainly it can be accounted for only on one supposition. And that is, that belief and unbelief in Scripture use, embrace in their meaning, essential right and wrong, virtue and vice, religion and irreligion. The surprise felt at their prominence as the very grounds of salvation and perdition, must have arisen from the idea that they are mere intellectual or involuntary or mystical states of mind. But this is not true. The Scriptures do not *mean* by them, any mystery, nor any mere mental

assent and dissent. They involve moral qualities. True faith is a believing with the heart, a principle that works by love. Faith is a feeling. It is a vital sense of things divine. It is a state of the heart in accordance with the thing believed. In fact, love is the very root of it, as it is of every virtue. Faith is but the form which the principle of love takes. And unbelief is the reverse of all this. It is hatred; it is hatred of truth and holiness. "Because I tell you the *truth*," says our Saviour, "ye believe me not." "Therefore they could not believe," it is said again. Why? Because, among other reasons, "their hearts were hardened."

But it is really unnecessary to go into a detailed examination of texts on this point, because there is one general argument that establishes it beyond all contradiction. The Bible everywhere demands repentance, sanctification, inward purity, as the means of favour with God and true happiness. The Bible is a book of conditions throughout; and it amazes us to hear it said and preached, that salvation is without conditions; the mere gift of God's mercy, without the doing of any thing on our part. But the condition of conditions, is a right heart. Does faith mean some other thing? Then the demand of it, contradicts every thing else in the Bible. It cannot be.

But if the thing required be essential, inward, spiritual virtue, why is it called faith? If love be the radical principle required, why is not love the thing specified? Why is it not *written*, "he that loveth shall be saved, and he that loveth not, shall be rejected?"

I answer, that virtually it is written; actually often, virtually always. But it is doubtless true, that the prominent *form* given to saving virtue in the New Testament is faith. In the New Testament I say;

for it is not so in the Old. *There* we hear much of being upright, beneficent, meek, humble, devout, as conditions of acceptance with heaven. But the New Testament puts all this most frequently, in the form of faith. Why? I repeat, and I answer,

First, because now a new dispensation was ushered into the world, and a new Teacher presented his claims; and the natural inquiry was, do you believe? The very form of the act of reception, was belief.

Secondly, belief, and belief avowed by baptism in that age of persecution, was the most unequivocal evidence of virtue, of piety, of inward and heartfelt devotion to the religion.

Thirdly, the Gospel was a more spiritual dispensation than that which preceded it; it insisted more upon an unseen and future life; and the appropriate act of the soul by which that future was laid hold of and made real, was faith. The thing could not be a matter of knowledge, but only of faith.

These reasons are so obvious that I need not dwell upon them. They account, I say, for Christians being described as *men* of *faith*. What radically *distinguished* them, was their following of Christ, their likeness to Christ; but what naturally *denominated* them, in an age of denial, skepticism and persecution, was the reception of the new religion, the adherence to it; "these," men would say, "are the *believers* in this new doctrine."

4. But there is another and more cogent reason, growing out of the time, which gave to faith its prominence. It was an age of reliance on ceremonial observances. Alike among the Pagans and the Jews, the great body of religious devotees trusted to an exact ritual fidelity for acceptance with God. The sacrifices duly offered, the times and the seasons all duly

observed, and every rite fulfilled; the votary thought himself entitled to acceptance with heaven. Against all such shallow and superficial claims, therefore, which might leave the heart completely unregenerate and unholy—against all such Pharisaical and proud pretensions, the apostles declared, with great emphasis and reiteration, that the means of acceptance with God was spiritual and not formal, and especially was a penitent and humble reliance on God's mercy through Jesus Christ; upon his mercy, i. e. as set forth in the teachings and sealed in the blood of Christ. It was, I say, the demand of an inward and spiritual virtue in opposition to an outward and useless formality. Justification by faith therefore; i. e., the being treated as if just, or in other words, the being pardoned and received to heaven through faith, was the great doctrine of Paul when contending against a world of Pagan and Jewish formalists. "Knowing," he says, "that a man is not justified by the works of the law, i. e. of the ceremonial law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law, shall no flesh be justified." This passage is in the Epistle to the Galatians. If you would obtain satisfaction on this point, I would request you to read at your leisure, the whole Epistle. You will see, I think, that the apostle is pleading the argument of faith against the Jew's reliance upon his ritual. The argument arose upon the conduct of Peter; upon his timid adherence to Jewish rites. Paul pursues this point; he keeps himself to it, in the main, I am certain; and I think, entirely. The question is continually about circumcision and the bondage to "the weak and beggarly elements of the world." "Ye observe days and

months," he says, "and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed labour on you in vain." It is true that he often speaks generally of the law, and it may be said that he means the whole law of Moses, both moral and ceremonial. I have no objection to this view, except that it makes the Apostle's reasoning less pertinent and cogent.

5. I have no objection to it, because faith is undoubtedly set forth, in the last place, as opposed to a sense of merit founded on a keeping of the moral law. This is the great subject of the first eight chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. It is the method of justification or of acceptance with God. And this, the Apostle declares, is a matter not of merit but of mercy. He draws a dark picture of the wickedness of the whole world, both Jewish and Gentile, in all ages, and comes to this conclusion: "Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified." "Therefore we conclude," he says again, "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Man cannot stand before God, demanding heaven, for his keeping of the moral law; but he must stand there asking heaven, as the gift of God's mercy through Jesus Christ. His only hope and comfort must come through believing in that mercy. Faith is not opposed to purity of heart at all; it *is* purity of heart; it springs from a right mind; it works by love; but it is opposed to a proud claim of God's favour and of heaven, set up on the ground of complete obedience.

The last two reasons, I may observe, were those which gave to the doctrine of justification by faith, its significance and prominence at the time of the Reformation. The Papal Church had fallen into a perilous reliance upon rites, penances and personal merits. *Luther felt*, with bitter pain, that these could not

sure to him the favour of heaven;* and he was led to cast himself simply upon the mercy of God in Christ. Here he found relief; and justification by faith therefore, became his great doctrine. But educated amidst mysteries and miracles, he was led to conceive that this faith had some mysterious power of appropriating the merits of Christ; and urged on by the enthusiasm of this new discovery, and the eagerness of dispute, he pushed his idea of faith to the point of derogating from good works; an error which has not yet spent itself.

An error, I say; for faith *embraces* in itself the very essence of all good works, all good affections. Faith is not some mysterious and technical condition of salvation. It is simply a Christian grace. It is essentially a right heart. It is the old, the everlasting, the universal condition of happiness and of God's favour here and hereafter—a right heart. And this is prevailingly represented in the New Testament as putting itself forth in the act, the form of faith; first, I repeat, because a new dispensation now appeared, and the reception of it of course was faith; secondly, because this religion was persecuted, and the most decisive test of love to it, was faith avowed—avowed, i. e. in baptism, for that was the specific proselyte's ordinance; thirdly, because this religion unfolded a future life, and the appropriate act for receiving that doctrine, was faith; fourthly, because the world was full of misguided devotees, relying on forms and rites, and the antagonist principle was faith, a reliance on God's mercy; fifthly, because the proud assumption of a goodness sufficient to claim heaven of right, is ever to be resisted; and

* Nor was this the feeling of Luther alone; but it prevailed to a considerable extent in the Catholic Church. See Ranke's History of the Popes: Book II

that which stands in contradiction to it, is faith; a penitent seeking for pardon and a reliance on that infinite compassion, of which Christ is the great revelation and pledge, the minister and the mercy-seat, the priest and the altar.

The essence, then, and the efficacy of faith, lie in the goodness, the love which is in it. This, I know, is denied. There is nothing which Calvin and his school more vehemently repudiate, than the idea that there is any worth or worthiness in faith, affording a reason for its being accepted of God, as the condition of his favour. It is maintained, on the contrary, that faith is a mere arbitrary condition. But what right has any one to say this? Where, in the Scriptures, is it said that faith, as a passport to heaven, is regarded without any reference to the virtue that is in it? Nowhere. Where, then, is it implied? Here is the point, I conceive, at which mistake has arisen. It is thought to be implied in those passages, which oppose faith to works. The mistake has arisen from failing to observe, that it is the claimed merit in those works which is opposed, and not the real virtue. "Do we then make void, the law through faith?" says Paul. "God forbid. Yea, we establish the law." "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

Justification by faith, then, is no unreasonable doctrine nor confounding mystery. It may be all made very plain by a simple comparison. You have given certain commands to your child, let us suppose, and you have promised certain rewards to obedience. The child has disobeyed. How, then, can he obtain the forfeited rewards? Evidently, if at all, it must be through your free grace and not through his merit. But what condition will you naturally and necessarily

appoint for his recovery of the lost blessings? He must repent, you will say; he must penitently *believe* in, i. e., receive the offered mercy. Without his believing in this mercy, and thus rejecting all just right to it, it is morally impossible that he should receive it.

Let us now add another consideration to make the comparison complete. The child, let us suppose, is obstinate and refuses to repent and believe. At this juncture, one of his brothers interposes and attempts the work of his recovery. With many labours and sacrifices, which wear upon his health, and at length bring him to the grave, he pleads and strives with the guilty one to return; or while engaged in the work, he innocently comes into collision with the laws of the country, and he dies a sacrifice for his brother. With all this, let us suppose, that the heart of the erring child is touched. He repents. With faith in the offered mercy, he comes and humbly asks that it may be bestowed upon him. What *now* is the character of this faith? It has taken, you perceive, a new element. It is faith in his brother's sacrifice. It is faith in his father's mercy, *through* that martyred brother. And this faith, it is evident, proceeds out of a changed heart. It is the very form which, in the circumstances, a changed heart naturally takes.

This, I believe, is the simple ground of that, which is often construed in so strange a manner,—Gospel acceptance. The representation of it by Christ and his Apostles, we should consider, grew out of circumstances and states of mind existing at that time. Thus, when our Saviour appeared, he came as Messiah. Would the Jews receive him as such? This was the great question to them. This was the special burthen of the time, that was pressed upon the Jewish conscience. Therefore, our Saviour says, "This is the

work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. That is, reverence for God, the love of God, would certainly manifest itself in this way. Thus again, Paul had to contend with self-justifying votaries, who claimed heaven on the ground of their ceremonies or merits. He takes them on their favourite ground, justification. He takes up their very word. He shows them that they cannot be justified in the way they propose. And, still using their word, though in strictness it cannot be applied to any human creature, he tells them that the only justification possible, is of another kind; a gratuitous one, being treated as if just; and this, through faith in God's mercy. The word, I say, as a representation of acceptance with God, is extremely figurative. Justification for us, sinners! Justification before God! The word almost shocks us. Literally it can have no application to us whatever. Only figuratively, and indeed as a violent figure, can it be tolerated for a moment. And the Apostle never would have adopted such a word, if circumstances had not pressed it upon him. But this figure adopted, Paul is naturally led to surround it with many figurative illustrations drawn from the relations of debtor and creditor, principal and surety, slave and freeman; and upon these *figures* has been built up a vast system of theology, of which, constructed no doubt with honest intent, I do not wish to say any thing more harsh, than that it seems to me an unsightly incumbrance upon the fair foundations of Christianity. The simple truth at the bottom of all, is this: the good man, continuing such, is happy, and blessed, and shall be forever—not as a matter of merit, but through the mercy of God, revealed in Jesus Christ: the bad man, while such, is miserable and ruined, and that without remedy.

I have thus attempted to make it appear that faith,

being but the *Christian* form of essential goodness, is the reasonable condition of happiness and God's favour, and that the want of faith, reasonably draws upon it the forfeiture of all this. Let me now occupy the remainder of this discourse with some distinct illustration of the natural place which faith holds in the system of religious efforts and influences, for I conceive that there is a significance in the scripture demand for faith, beyond what is ordinarily seen; not only a pertinence in the word, in the form, but a significance in the thing.

Let me explain this view, before I proceed to make it the ground of some more practical consideration. Of all true excellence, then, love is the root, the primal form, the comprehensive character. God is *love*, not faith. Faith is an attribute of imperfect natures. But now, in such natures, what *place* does faith hold? I answer, that of the most immediate motive power. I cannot act, as an intellectual and moral being, without faith; i. e. without conviction. I cannot obey God unless I believe in him. I cannot follow Christ, unless I believe in him. I cannot yield to the influence of any truth, unless I believe in it. I cannot care for the soul, my own or another's, unless I believe in the soul. I cannot resist temptation, unless I believe in virtue and purity. I cannot live in hope of immortality, unless I believe in a future life. The immediate motive power then is faith.

Faith, if I may say so, stands between love and works. To draw a comparison from the mill that grinds corn; love is the stream, faith is the water-wheel, good works are the product. Thus faith works by love, and purifies the soul—purifies the life. And the result is certain; it is involved in the principle that produces it. Thus when St. Paul says that men are

saved by faith, and St. James, that they are saved by works, both mean the same thing: the one speaks of the necessary impulse, the other of the inevitable act that follows.

From all this then it appears that the immediate, manifest, practical obstacle to our salvation, appears in the form of unbelief. Let us consider for a few moments in this serious light, this great evil of unbelief.

The divine goodness has provided a vast array of means for our recovery from sin, and growth in virtue and piety. Why are they attended with so little effect? What is it that thwarts heaven's great design? It is unbelief.

Let us enter into this matter a little. Religion is not a subject that we pass by altogether. We suffer it to speak to us. We assemble ourselves to listen. It is a solemn occasion. If it is a light or formal thing to any one here, I must tell him that it is not so to me. This weekly assembling together, is to me a momentous fact in life. Religion, invested with the grandeur of heaven, speaks to us; and how? As a reasonable claim, as a sovereign authority, as a momentous interest, as an all-sufficing good. The preacher discourses upon all these things. He speaks of the blessedness and glory of a sacred virtue. He holds up a grand and sublime spirituality, a divine, inward sufficiency as reigning over all other distinctions, all other advantages, all other joys. He teaches every man that he may walk in the divinest purity and gladness, and in the noblest independence, not only of other men, but of his own base passions. He shows him, that the walk of daily life, strewed with virtues, may be brighter than the starry pathways of heaven. Oh! what a blessed thing were it, if when

he hearer leaves the threshold of the Church, he should enter upon that glorious course! Why does he not? This stupendous truth of the Gospel message—great enough to revolutionize the world, to renovate society, to regenerate the heart, to fill the man with the very light and joy of heaven—why does it avail him so little? Because, verily he does not believe it! Because he has no inward sense of things divine and immortal, that makes it all a reality. An evil heart of unbelief it is, that spreads mist and darkness, doubt and indifference over the whole glorious theme.

But again, what is to penetrate and scatter this cloud of unbelief? It is attention; fixed, piercing thought and devoted meditation. This, by the law of our nature, and by every law of the Gospel, is the grand means of impression. Why does not every man give this attention? Why does not every man say, "I will think and read; I will consider; I will pray; I will earnestly seek the great blessing of the beatitudes?" Again, I say, because he does not believe in the thing thus urged upon his attention. Ah! no; men do not believe in being good. We hear much of the great and distant things they do not believe in. They do not believe in heaven, nor hell, nor eternity. I would that they believed in *being good!*

There is a worldly nonchalance about this matter of religion, most painful, most discouraging to witness. In this deepest concern of their nature, men suffer themselves to be governed by every sort of worldly policy; by the wishes of friends, by the fashions of society, by the vainest and idlest considerations. Religion!—what in the world, is so cast aside among the things of convenience and favour and fashion and utter folly? Yes, religion is, as it were, foolishness to multitudes. They do not feel its serious import. They do not

believe in it. Business they believe in. Pleasure they believe in. Houses and lands, luxuries and honours, they believe in. On these points they are decided enough. Present a chance for acquisition of property; and though it be necessary to take a distant journey, or to spend all day and all night at the ware-house, or to peril health, and yet—let family and children and society and the world say what they will—yet they will do it; they must do it. They take a firm stand and a decided step. It is a serious interest, and they must attend to it. But religion!—why, it is *somebody's notion!* That is their account of it. Religion!—it seems as if the very substance of the thing dissolved away into nothing; as if the letters that compose the word, lost their coherence, and sunk away like fading points of light in a thickening mist. How can men be fixed and resolute about a thing seen in that way! They cannot. And so a man says, with an air of oracular wisdom, "It is no small thing to take a decided stand in the matter!" or, "It is no small thing to take a decided stand in an unpopular cause or communion!" Oh! heaven, why does he not feel that conscience is no small thing; that his spiritual improvement is no small thing; but is the infinite thing? Because, he does not believe in that conscience; he does not feel in himself, how priceless that spiritual improvement is.

And thus again the reason why he does not put forth that deepest act of all—the solemn and determined effort to be good and pure—why he does not work out his own salvation; the reason, I say, is, that in this depth of the heart where all human power lies, there are no living springs of faith. All is cold and barren there. That which should be the deepest soil from which fair and heavenly graces spring, is a dead lump

of obstinate unbelief and indifference. The spirit of God never breathes upon that sterile spot. It is closed and barred up against the sacred influence, by pride and vanity, by cares and pleasures, by ambition and gain. And the worldly man chooses it should be so. There is no faith in him to make him think that there is any thing better. And so every thing that might help him, is resisted; the pleading of truth, the demand for attention, the call to effort.

If now it be asked, in fine, what good end is to be served, by saying and showing all this? I answer, first, that it vindicates the Gospel demand for faith as pertinent and reasonable. This is already sufficiently apparent. But I answer, further, that it shows the defect, the fault to be in us, and not in the motives which religion itself proposes. There is power enough in religion to save us,—God ever helping it,—if we would let it work within us. It is sufficient to make us happy and blessed, if we would give it a trial. No man ever truly gave it a trial and denied its power. Yes, it is all true—that which we profess to believe, and do not believe. It is as true, as if the whole horizon around us and the whole heaven above us, were filled with shapes, with pictures of the solemn and glorious verities of our faith. It is as true that sin in the heart will eat and canker, poison and destroy, as if a man could lay his finger upon the very spot where this awful work is going on. It is as true that the good deed is a glorious and blessed thing, as if when it is done, a halo of heavenly light should instantly surround it. It is as true, that penitence, purity, humility, goodness, self-sacrifice, in the heart, is the divinest joy and glory, as if all the treasures and splendours of the universe drew near and gathered around, to pay it homage. The faith of the heart is a stronger assurance than all

the visions of the outward sense. When fortune smiles around me, I may think that I am happy; when sanctity and love breathe within me, I know it. And therefore it is certain and it is evident, that he who believeth shall be saved, shall be blessed in God and in the love of God; and that he who believeth not, must fail of the infinite blessing, the only blessing, the blessing of the beatitudes!

THAT ERRORS IN THEOLOGY HAVE SPRUNG FROM FALSE PRINCIPLES OF REASONING.

"*O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called;*" (i. e., vain disputes about words, and scholastic subtilties;) "*which some professing, have erred concerning the faith.*"—1 Timothy, vi. 20, 21.

THAT errors in theology have sprung from false principles of reasoning, is the hint in the text, from which I shall draw the subject of my present discourse. It is a large theme; it will lead me to consider some important departments of theology; and I must bespeak your patience.

If I were called upon to say on what subject the greatest errors had prevailed among mankind, I should answer, undoubtedly on that of religion. In this I suppose all thinking men are agreed. Paganism, for example, has embodied more enormous errors than ever were found in philosophy. To place the earth, for instance, at the centre of the solar system, is a small mistake compared with setting up a hideous idol to represent the living God, or with sacrificing human victims to that idol. No delusions so mournful have ever overspread the world as those on demonology and witchcraft, the Inquisition, the purchased absolution

of sins, and the unchallenged supremacy of the spiritual power.

If, again, I were called upon to say, from what subject, error would most slowly disappear, I should still answer, from that of religion; and for this simple and sufficient reason, that on no subject have men's minds so little freedom. Emancipation from error is always achieved by free and courageous inquiry; but the arm that is stretched out into the spiritual realm, is paralyzed by fear. To tell men that they dare not think freely on religion, would provoke, it is very likely, a hasty denial. But the very conditions of all past religious investigation, involve this inevitable consequence. Can men think freely, under peril of eternal perdition for erring in their thought? Can they freely examine the claims of a revered church, or the tenets of an exclusive orthodoxy, which says, "every step of departure from me, is a step out of the only pale of safety?" It is clearly impossible. And therefore it is not to be thought surprising, if the religion of the world has been and is involved in deeper error, than any other subject of its thought. There have been dark ages in science; but there have been darker ages in religion. From science the darkness has passed away. Has it passed away from religion?

This leads me to another observation. While there has been a grand reform in science, a revision of the theories of the dark ages, there has been no similar reform, on a great scale, in religion. Lord Bacon led the reform in science; but there has been no Lord Bacon in religion. Luther was not a reformer of that cast. No deep and philosophical inquiry, but only an earnest and effectual protest against religious domination, was his mission. Some freedom for religion he gained; some partial change in doctrine he effected;

but there was no free and thorough investigation of the nature of religion in his time. A political, not a doctrinal reformation was the great change which he accomplished.

I say there has been no Lord Bacon in religion, no *novum organum religionis*. And this I say without any prejudice to the eminent persons who, within the last three centuries, have attempted to reform the religion of their age. It is easy to see that even with equal merit, they could not have equal success. If a new discovery be made in chemistry or astronomy, all the world is comparatively ready to receive it. But let a new proposition be brought forward in religion, and not only is it less susceptible, from its very nature, of demonstration, but a host of prejudices and fears is arrayed against it. Science, it is true, has sometimes met with a hard fate in the world; but religion has never met with any other. *One* Galileo has been imprisoned; but ten thousands of heretics have been cast into dungeons, there to waste away the slow, forgotten years; unless, as has been common, the malice of their persecutors demanded the infliction and the sight of sharper agonies. Little chance was there for free thought to advance under such auspices; and little has it advanced, even till now.

In fact, has the true method of inquiry ever yet been fairly introduced, into the prevalent theology of Christendom? Rejecting all presumptuous and preconceived theories, Lord Bacon proposed to enter the field of nature, and to ask what are the facts, and then upon this basis, to build up the true theory. But in theology, a totally opposite method, i. e. the old scholastic method, has been pursued. Theories have taken precedence of facts, not facts of theories. What are our modern creeds but theories? What are the Thirty-

nine Articles, and the Westminster Catechism, and the Augsburg Confession, but theories of religion? I do not deny that theories have their place in philosophy, and might have in religion; i. e. as mere hypotheses to explain the facts. Only as mere suppositions are they philosophically safe. But what are they in religion? Minatory creeds, catechisms for children. I pray you to conceive of it. Theories in philosophy have been held to be perilous enough—bars to progress; but on what other subject besides theology were theories ever taught to children? Nay, more, not only do modern creeds and catechisms thus forestall our decisions, but the Bible itself is placed in a position which is hostile to the true, philosophical, inductive method of inquiry. The Bible is regarded not merely as throwing the light of teaching and interpretation upon the paths of our religious inquiries, but as the only source of light; not merely as illustrating the facts of religious experience, but as furnishing all the facts; not merely as a guide in the field of investigation, but as the field too. The theologian sits down to the reading of the Scriptures, disdaining, repudiating, abhorring all philosophical explanation from without. His aim, he says, is a single one. He boasts that he takes the sentences of holy writ just as they are; that he explains each sentence by itself—not even admitting any "analogy of faith" to guide him; that one text for a doctrine is as good as a thousand; and, in fine, that his nature, his reason, his conscience, are to bow down and to be as nothing, in the presence of this record. This is the very chivalry of theology; to make of the man, the inquirer, nothing; and of the matter to be inquired into, every thing.

But let us consider more particularly, for a moment, what is the true method of inquiry. It is to stud-

facts in religion as we study facts in nature; and upon them to build up our system of doctrine. It is to hold theory in strict subjection to facts. Theory, hypothesis, has its place in philosophy;—but what place? That, I repeat, of mere supposition; liable always to be modified by the facts. It is natural for us to seek explanation; i. e., to frame a general scheme or plan of thought or belief, under which the known facts may arrange themselves, and by which they may be accounted for. Thus there have been theories in geology; one, for instance, which explained the structure and condition of the earth by the action of fire; another, by the action of water. But what rational geologist ever reasoned as if his theory were to govern the facts? So in the study generally, whether of nature or of the mind. What true philosopher makes it his business to bend the facts to his theory, or, when some new and hostile fact is presented, permits himself to say, "*that* is opposed to one of my five points, or of my thirty-nine articles, and therefore it cannot be; nay, the assertion of it shall be punished as heresy?" Or, when some irreconcileable contradiction of ideas is charged upon his theory, what philosopher is permitted to say, "Ah! that is a mystery; and it is only your proud reason that resists; which God will confound!" But is the true method one thing in philosophy, and another in religion? That is the grand, fatal, false, unphilosophical presumption on which most religious argument has proceeded; that the ordinary, philosophical method of reasoning may not be applied to religion. And the whole weight of church power for ages has been brought to crush down facts beneath theories, and simple inquiry beneath authoritative creeds. And every martyr's stake, and fire, and blood, have been witnesses to that stupendous perversion.

For this is no matter of mere speculation. Religious freedom, freedom to think on religion—this highest blessing on earth—has paid the dearest price. Nothing on earth has cost such pain. It has brought not peace, but a sword. Its baptism has been, not in joy, but in agony. Its keen and piercing eye has looked out into the world, has looked out to eternity, beneath bloody brows, and from eye-lids seared with fire. "I have experiences," says the confessor, "convictions, facts, texts, that do not agree with your theory, your creed." "Go," has been the answer, "go and tell us if you can see them through the living flame! Or go and brood over them in the loneliness of universal desertion and obloquy!"

But where now, let us ask again, are the religious facts to be found and studied? I answer, in human nature, and in the Bible; not in one alone, but in both. Nay more; the relation between these two sources of knowledge is such that human nature and experience must interpret the book. "The Bible, the Bible"—be it our religion; but the Bible as against theories, creeds, traditions, all coercive, combined power; not as against individual human experience; not as distinct from that experience.

Consider, whether to make it so, be not fatal alike to every claim, whether of Scripture or reason. The Bible is predicated upon human experience, is based upon it, addresses that experience, adopts its very language, uses words which could have no meaning at all, unless their interpretation were found in the human heart. The Bible, we say, is a revelation concerning God's nature and man's duty. But it could be no revelation at all, to a race which had no ideas of that nature and that duty. When it said to man, "Be *pure*, humble, upright, good," it went upon the pre

sumption that he had already some sense and experience of these qualities; else it had been as words to the deaf. Its intent was to elevate this experience, not to supersede it. To set it aside, to fling it out of the account, were suicidal, fatal to the end, subversive of *all* just principles of reasoning.

Suppose that a revelation were given concerning nature without us. To interpret the revelation, should we not be obliged to consult nature, and to give it a fair hearing. Should we say, "It is a coarse, material clod, and before the divine light of revelation, it is as nothing; not worth listening to?" And if the facts of nature seemed to conflict with the words of the Book, should we not say, "The discrepancy must be removed, by some new understanding of the facts, or better interpretion of the words?" And if the facts, after all inquiry, stood open, unquestionable, irrefragable, against our interpretation, should we not feel that the interpretation must inevitably give way?

And so with regard to the Bible and the facts of human nature; is it to nullify those facts? Was it intended to foreclose and seal up all other sources of spiritual knowledge? Is the Bible to stand by itself, apart and alone; and are its declarations to be interpreted without any aid of human experience? If so, I pray to be told what interpreting means. I interpret what I do not know, by what I do know. I interpret the book without me, by the reason, conscience, experience within me. It is not possible for me to do otherwise. Is it said that divine aid is to be sought, to assist our reason and conscience? It is true. But what is meant by aiding any faculty? To supersede, discard, deny it—is that aiding it?

No, the Bible is to throw light on human nature, not to blot it out or to treat it as if it were a blot or a blank.

or a mass of darkness. It is to elicit those truths that lie deep in humanity, and not to cast it aside as having no truth in it. It is kindly and generously to cultivate the soul, and not to crush it down to ignominy and despair. Nay more, if there is or seems to be, any certain fact in human nature, the interpreter is to pause upon that fact, and to take care how he explains any thing against it. If it *be* a fact, established and sure, nothing in the record of truth *can* be against it. The theologian, for a while, stood against the facts of science, the science of astronomy, the true theory of the solar system; but he found at length, that rolling of worlds would not obey the laws of criticism, and criticism was obliged to yield. And so against the fact of moral freedom in man, he has held dogmas and theories, but he will find that those dogmas and theories must give way. And thus also, if there be any thing in his constructions of the Trinity, the atonement or of human depravity, which directly conflict with unquestionable facts in the mind, he may be sure that those constructions must share the same fate.

Let us now proceed to carry these principles into a brief survey of certain questions in Theology.

The first question to which I shall invite your attention is that which has been so long agitated concerning the nature of God; the question, that is to say, whether God exists in Trinity or in Unity; or whether Trinity and Unity, as held in Theology, are compatible with each other.

To proceed inductively with this inquiry, to proceed on the ground of knowledge and not of presumption, we should ask for the revelation of God first, in our own minds; secondly, in nature; and, thirdly, in Scripture. Now from each of these we gain the conviction that God is one. And when we say he is one, we

mean that he is one self-conscious Agent, one and the self-same Creator, Sustainer and Benefactor, the living and the only living and true God. We mean this, or we mean nothing that is intelligible in the case. There are different kinds of Unity. There is a unity of plan, of powers, of principles. That is one thing. But when we speak of unity in a being, we mean that he is self-conscious; conscious that he is himself and no other. The being that can say, "I," cannot turn to another and say "you," and yet mean himself. Now it is in this sense, if we ascribe personality to God, that we must say, he is one.

But may not this unity admit of some kind of modification? May we not conceive of God as one in one sense, and three in another? Certainly we may: and not only as three but as more than three. As many attributes, as many modes of action as he has, may he be in this sense, more than one. But can we conceive him to be one and three in such a sense, as to lay a foundation for the application of the personal pronouns, I, thou, he: so that one portion of his being can say to another portion of his being, "I send you," or, "I commission you to send forth *him*?" This I am obliged by the very principles of my mind, of my nature, to deny. It is inconceivable and incredible, because it involves an inevitable contradiction of ideas. It is not something which we refuse to believe because it is mysterious, but which we cannot believe because it is impossible. There is no possible conception of an intelligent, and conscious being, which will permit him to commission or to send himself, to do that, which he himself does not do. You see that the very language in which such a proposition is announced, creates an inextricable confusion and contradiction of thought.

But observe now, that this is the Trinity that is taught

to us and urged upon our faith. The question is not whether God may exist in some triuned form; a question abstractly of no interest to us; but whether he exists in that relation of Father, Son and Spirit, which is recognized in the prevailing creeds. These three, according to those creeds, devised a scheme of redemption in heaven. They assumed different offices, acted different parts in its accomplishment. The Father sent the Son on this mission. The Holy Spirit followed to make it effectual. Here are represented three beings. Suppose it were said that they held "sweet and ineffable society together." This *was* said in a former age: it was the theme of many pious raptures. The idea is now discarded, because it is found to be at variance with the Unity. But the scruple, it appears to me, is unnecessary. Three persons, of whom one can send another, and the third can go forth to accomplish their design, are as truly three beings, as if they had friendship and held converse with each other.

It pains my reverence for things sacred, to speak with this freedom of the nature of the Infinite Being. But I am driven into it by the exigencies of this argument. And I must be permitted also to say, that I do not feel myself to be speaking so much of the divine nature, as of the conceptions which men entertain of it. And I must press you to consider that these *are* the prevailing conceptions of the Trinity. It will not do for any one to shrink back or to withdraw this subject into the shadows of obscurity and mysticism, and to say, "I do not profess to understand it; doubtless it is a mystery; all that I know is, that so I am taught, and so I believe." Nay, I reply, but you do profess to understand it to this extent; that you have distinct conceptions of the three distinct persons; and so distinct are

these persons of the Trinity in your idea of them, that no power of human reason or imagination can make them one being.

Nor with the Bible in your hands, can you blend this distinctness into confusion. The Son, sent into the world by the Father; the Son united to humanity, and thus constituting a peculiar person, God-man, and in this character labouring and suffering to work out our salvation: the Son, I say, offering a sacrifice on earth to the Father in heaven, is a distinct actor, a distinct being to your thought, nor can you conceive of him otherwise. And this conception, I say, which you cannot help, is fatal to the Unity.

Let the believer in the Trinity bear with me; for I mean him no disrespect. He will say that he does believe both in the Trinity and Unity. Let us in this matter, look beneath words for one moment. When he thinks at one time of the Father as God, and at another of the Son as God, and at another of the Holy Spirit as God; he is not necessarily a Trinitarian. At no one of these times, probably, does he think of more than one of these persons as God. So the Swedenborgian worships Jesus Christ as God, and as the only God; and he is a Unitarian. Again, when he conceives of the one only, self-conscious, Infinite Being, as manifesting himself now in the Father, now in the Son, and now in the Holy Ghost, he is not a Trinitarian but a Sabellian. And when he says in his prayer, "O holy, adorable and ever-blessed Trinity," still is he not worshipping a name, rather than what the Trinity means in theology? Could he pray in this manner? "O Father, Christ, and Holy Ghost, I implore each of you to help me; I pray Thee, Christ, to intercede for me; Thee, Father, to pardon me, and Thee, Holy Ghost, to apply the benefits of redemption to my

soul. I beseech you to combine your respective counsels and to employ your respective interpositions for my relief." This would be a prayer in accordance with dogmatic Trinitarianism; but I believe that such a prayer has seldom or never been offered in the world.

The dogma of the Trinity, I say, destroys every kind of unity that can be conceived of in an intelligent being. And if it does, I maintain that it must be given up. We cannot believe in an essential contradiction. Here stands a fact in the mind, which, like a fact in nature, like the order of the solar system, is not to be set aside by any interpretation. That three self-conscious persons are one and the same self-conscious Being, we cannot believe. Once it was held that absurdity is no bar to faith; nay, "the greater the absurdity the greater the faith:" this was the hardness of the old Theology. But philosophy has been slowly wresting from theology the admission, that absurdity is essentially incredible.

An attempt, indeed, has been made to show that we can believe in such a contradiction, by alleging that there are similar contradictions in science. But the instances cited, as might be anticipated, fall under the head of mysteries, not absurdities. There are paradoxes; i. e. there are ideas, there are pure mathematical calculations, which, when applied to matter, involve us in inextricable confusion of thought: but it is a new thing to say, that there are "irreconcilable contradictions" in science. The strongest instance of the sort is taken from the infinite divisibility of matter. A world and a grain of sand are infinitely divisible; i. e. they can be divided into an infinite number of parts. But infinites are equal. Therefore the world and the grain are of equal size. Nay, why stop here? Therefore both the world and the grain of sand are in-

finite; for that which consists of an infinite number of parts, must be infinitely large. Infinites! infinites! is the obscurity which rests upon that which has no limits, to blind us to a plain and palpable contradiction, presented to us by human minds, within the confines of a human creed?*

Presented to us, I say, by human minds; for I deny that any such doctrine is presented to us by the divine Mind. In other words, we deny, with the utmost strength of conviction, that the doctrine of the Trinity is taught in the Scriptures.

With regard to the argument from the Scriptures, it will not be expected in a discourse of this nature, that I should enter upon it. I will only make two brief observations, in consonance with the views upon which I am insisting.

When we take up the New Testament, we immediately begin to read of Jesus. He is the great subject of the book. He is a child; he is a youth; he grows up to maturity; he teaches the people; he is the most devout and pure of all that ever dwelt on earth; he lives; he dies; he ascends to heaven—"to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God." Now had not the early Platonizing fathers introduced among the subtilties of their philosophy, the doctrine of the Trinity; had we, in these more enlightened times, never heard of the Trinity; had we been left simply to take the impression of the New Testament just as it is; I suppose nothing could have equalled the amazement with which we should have heard it asserted, that this Jesus was God; the very God who sent him

* It is as if, because matter is infinitely divisible, we were required to believe that a world and a grain of sand are of equal size; or to state the parallel more exactly—since there can be but *one infinite*—that both the world and the grain of sand are one and the same identical substance.

into the world; the Creator of the very earth on which he walked, of the very men who put him to death!

My second observation I wish to preface with a single remark. It is this: we are to arrive at the meaning of the Evangelists and Apostles through their language; just as we are to come at the meaning of any other writers through their language. Inspiration did not change the natural style of those men; for each one has his own. This, among the learned, is now generally admitted. My observation, then, is to the following effect: that is to say, *I will take the biography of any great man that has lived, and I will draw from it the same kind of evidence for his divinity, as that on which the Trinitarian relies in proof of the Deity of Jesus.* "He shall be supreme and alone in the love and confidence" of the people, is a language applied to a statesman of our own. Had these identical words been found in the New Testament, applied to Christ, how certainly would they have been quoted in support of his divine claims! "Supreme and alone in men's love and confidence?" That is the very description of what is due to God. Again, in a notice of the celebrated Mr. Pitt, occurs the following language: "The penetration of his mind was sagacious, was infinite. His history is the history of civilized nations; as his counsels influenced and directed every movement in every corner of the habitable globe." A penetration that was infinite; an influence that ruled the habitable world! Do the proof texts of the Trinitarian argument contain stronger phraseology than this? And what does all this prove? Why, that the Trinitarian constructions are forbidden by all just criticism. And I do surely and solemnly aver—indeed the case is too plain to admit of any doubt—that he who rejects this

conclusion, does so because he holds that the Bible is *not* to be interpreted as other books are.

I cannot refrain from one further observation upon the Scriptures, to show that this rule of interpretation, and the conclusion, too, are strictly and expressly sustained by a rule of Bible criticism upon the Bible itself. Recollect that the Trinitarian hypothesis sets forth that the Messiahship of Jesus was a laying aside of his God-like dignity, and that, on this account, he is represented as inferior. We should expect, then, that when he had accomplished this work, he would re-assume his supreme grandeur. Listen, then, to the following language; enough, one would think, to settle the whole question:—"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him." Is it not amazing that the doctrine of Christ's Deity should be maintained against this divine canon of criticism. As if it were said, "Of course, no one will imagine that any lofty ascriptions of power and glory to Christ are to bring into question the undisputed supremacy over him, of God himself. It is manifest that *He* is for ever to be excepted from all such inferences." But hear the Apostle's conclusion, and then judge what is to be thought of this hypothesis of Christ's temporary and apparent inferiority and real equality. "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him; that God may be all in all."

But I must hasten to leave this part of my subject. So powerful, so overwhelming has appeared to me the argument against the Trinity, that for years I confess

I have been looking for its effect upon the churches of England and America. I have sometimes involuntarily said, "Is it possible that what appears so clear to me, so unanswerable, can go for nothing with the minds of others? What are the men of England and America thinking—not the clergy alone, but the reading men, the scholars, the statesmen, the educated men—what are they thinking about this matter? Or do they not think of it at all? Does a great question which Newton, and Locke, and Milton, and Priestley, and Price decided against them, seem to be unworthy of their attention."

With this inquiry in my mind, I have looked with no little interest upon a modification of the Trinitarian hypothesis, which three distinguished scholars, in three different countries, Germany, Great Britian, and America, have presented to the public attention.* The English theologian speaks of God, in Sabellian phrase, as "revealed in three characters, as standing in three relations to us,"† or, in other words, he maintains that the one God has so put his name and displayed his energy in the Father, Son and Spirit, that each of them may be lawfully, and is actually required to be, worshipped.‡ His language is very cautious, but as far as I can ascertain its meaning, it would seem that he does not believe in an Eternal Son or Eternal Spirit; but only that when Jesus Christ appeared, and the Divine Spirit was poured out upon the hearts of men, there was such a demonstration of God's power in them, that they may be lawfully worshipped. The German theologian, though reputed Orthodox, adopts the theory of Sabellius. But he de-

* Schleiermacher, Archbishop Whateley, and Professor Stuart.

† See Sermon on God's Abode with his People.

‡ See Sermon on the name Emmanuel.

nies that the common view of Sabellianism is correct. This is his exposition of it—difficult, however, to distinguish, in any material respect, from the common view—"that the Trinity exists as such, only in relation to the various methods and spheres of action belonging to the Godhead." In governing the world in all its various operations on finite beings, the Godhead is *Father*. As redeeming, by special operations in the person of Christ, and through him, it is Son. As sanctifying, and in all its operations on the community of believers, and as a Unity in the same, the Godhead is *Spirit*."* The distinction, he holds, is modal, not essential; is not eternal, but began in time. The American Professor is not satisfied with this exposition.† He holds that "distinctions are co-eternal in the Godhead." But he utterly rejects the idea that "there are three separate consciousnesses, wills," in the persons of the Trinity. He admits that this would be Tritheism. He is offended with those who say, that there was society, counsel, or consultation among the persons of the Trinity. Yet what more this is—what more distinct consciousness it implies, than to say, that the *Father sent the Son* into the world, it is difficult to perceive.

But the question is, Is it possible to receive what is said of the Father and the Son in the New Testament without conceiving of them as possessing separate consciousness and will? I affirm, without any shadow of doubt, that it is not possible. The Professor says, that the language is to be received with qualification, and he compares it to that in which it is said,

* Schleiermacher's tract on Sabellius, translated by Prof. Stuart, in the 18th and 19th Nos, of the Biblical Repository and Quarterly Observer.

† See Prof. Stuart's "Remarks" on Dr. Schleiermacher's Tract, in the Biblical Repository and Quarterly Observer, No. 19.

that God walks upon the earth; that he ascends and descends. Are the cases parallel? In the one, we easily and naturally understand the representation to be figurative? Is the other of the same nature? Is it figurative language? And may we suppose that the reality is as different from the figure, as omnipresence is different from ascending and descending. Then we may all believe in the Trinity! Then the Trinity vanishes away into nothing; into a mere figure of speech. When we read, I still insist, that God the Father sent his Son into the world; that the Son lived on earth; that he prayed to God the Father; that he ascribed all his power and wisdom to God; in short, that he always spoke of God, his Father, as a being distinct from himself; is it possible, I repeat, to conceive of him as himself, that very God and Father? And I re-affirm that it is not possible.

The history of opinions shows that it is not possible. The early fathers of the Church, either did not hold to the equality of the persons, and were Arians or quasi Arians, or they did hold to the equality, and were Tritheists. The modern creeds partake much of the Tritheistic character. This, the Professor mainly admits. This, Schleiermacher feels. Hence their efforts to relieve the subject from the errors of ages. Hence this new teaching to the churches. But can it be that a cardinal, essential, saving doctrine of Christianity has been left to be cleared up by dialectic skill, at the end of eighteen centuries of the Christian history? What is to become of the mass of men, what has become of them, if this dialectic skill is necessary for the true understanding of the true doctrine?

Our own position on this subject, we may add, i. e., our position as reformers, is very different. We are endeavouring, it is true, to present a safe and sound

doctrine. But we do not say that any view of Trinity or Unity, any view of the metaphysical nature of God, is necessary to salvation. At the same time, we certainly think that it is better to see things clearly, than to see them through a mist. And especially, when we find that the doctrine of the Trinity is represented as essential to salvation, we see, then, that it so takes hold of human superstition and fear, that it so enlists human intolerance, and does such wrong and mischief in every way, as to call at our hands for the most earnest resistance.*

The further leading topics in theology may be embraced under the two following heads: human nature and its redemption. I can do but little more in the space that remains to me, than to point out the true course of inquiry, in opposition to mere hypothesis.

Our catechisms taught us that human nature is totally depraved. Here was hypothesis working upon its most delicate and susceptible material, the mind of childhood. If we would pursue the true method of inquiry, we must forget all this, and take up the subject anew.

Here is a theory. It says that there is no goodness in human nature. Suppose a theory to assert that there is no faculty of reason in human nature. Should we not appeal to fact, to experience? The theory says that the moral quality of human nature is one of unmixed evil. Indeed, it asserts a fact, and a universal

* The importance attributed to this doctrine strikingly appears in what Prof. Stuart says of Schleiermacher's view of it. After giving an affecting account of his death, he adds: "Can it be that a man who lived thus, and died thus, was not a Christian? I feel constrained to say that I mourn his loss to the world, as an efficient and powerful writer; but I cannot mourn as one without hope for him"! What would Prof. Stuart think if he could anticipate such a sentence as this, written concerning himself?

and unqualified fact. In man naturally, in the mass of men unconverted, there is nothing truly good. An animal amiableness there may be, but there is nothing accordant with the sacred and heaven-approving law of right.

But this right—now to take up the argument—this right, I say; how did we ever come to know that there was any such thing at all? "Our conscience taught us," it will be said. But conscience pronounces upon something. Upon what does it pronounce? It recognizes certain facts; that is to say, certain emotions, experiences. But what facts, what experiences? Experiences of right and wrong; of right as well as wrong. In short, universal conscience sitting in judgment on the universal experience, pronounces a part of it to be right, and a part of it to be wrong. We *feel* that there are right, good, blessed things in our common humanity. All our conduct, confidence, love towards one another, shows it. Flashings of indignation towards cruelty and oppression, tears of joy over holy human pity and relief, show it. All human literature, philosophy, law, government, proclaim the same conviction. The entire mass of human sentiment and institution stands as one emphatic contradiction to the dogma of total depravity.

But it is said, that this human judgment cannot be relied on, that it is false. Then every thing is false. Then the very power on which we rely for ascertaining the truth is false. Then, too, the Bible is false. For the Bible puts itself upon the verdict of the universal conscience. That conscience declares it to be right. But if the judgment is worthless, that claim of the book falls. If the eye of the soul sees nothing truly, if the light in us be darkness, how great is that darkness?

But does not the book itself, contradicting the universal conscience, teach the doctrine in question? It cannot, I think we may say. It would take a suicidal part if it did. It would destroy its own foundations. It does not. It simply speaks as we all speak, who feel that the world is full of evil. Here and there a strong expression—of a wounded conscience saying, "I was shapen in iniquity"—of outraged holiness amidst a wicked people, saying, "They have all gone out of the way; there is none that doeth good, no, not one,"—this is the whole evidence. One text may stand against it all; recognizing conscience as a law, and some obedience to that law, as things actually existing in the most degraded portions of mankind. "For when the Gentiles," says Paul, "who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness; and their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

Finally, Redemption from sin—let us consider it. It is a comprehensive work; its theatre, the world; its sphere, human life; its security, God's will and purpose; its agents, God's power and Spirit; its process, the soul's conversion and sanctification; and its special means, Christ's life and sacrifice. In all these we devoutly believe; and we are only anxious that nothing here be construed unwisely or unreasonably; that nothing be inculcated concerning the soul's conversion, at variance with the soul's nature; nothing concerning God's purpose, hostile to human freedom; nothing concerning the atonement, derogatory to the divine wisdom and goodness. It is in vain to say that reason and philosophy have nothing to do with these

matters. They have something, they have much to do with them; they are at the very bottom of that progress which orthodox theology in various quarters is now making. There is indeed much opposition still to the great inductive study of facts and principles; but the opposition is giving way, and it will continue to yield to the advances of a rational and pure Christianity.

It is not till now, let me remark, when we touch the subject of Redemption, that we have reached the ground of what is practical in religion. The questions which we have thus far considered, are speculative, though the latter, it is true, has important moral bearings. But we come now to the questions that touch the essential human welfare: what has been done for it, and what *is* to be done? What has God done, and what is man to do?

Let us attempt here, again, to draw the dividing line between fact and hypothesis. What is fact? A world is made; man is placed upon it; he has a moral nature, a nature, i. e. liable to err, and actually and deeply erring, but capable of recovery and improvement; life is filled with ministrations to virtue, and with restraints upon evil; and with *our* belief, certain Christian facts are to be reckoned in the account; to wit, that to the natural means of virtue and redemption, certain special means are added, the teaching, the example, the miracles, and the sufferings of Christ; and moreover, we believe that a divine influence is imparted to help human endeavour. That endeavour, at the same time, is to be put forth; it is demanded by reason and Scripture; it is implied in this demand that man has some power to work out his welfare; and it is a matter of fact that he has *such* a power.

Now to explain the facts of the human condition and redemption, a certain hypothesis is introduced. And let it be repeated, that the introduction of an hypothesis is not to be condemned, provided it be well considered that it is a mere supposition. If it is reasonable; if it appears best to explain the facts; if it does not contradict any of the facts; it may be properly entertained *as a supposition;* it may justly stand till some better explanation is offered. But what is the hypothesis on which the prevailing theology is founded? It is more than hypothesis, to be sure, with its supporters. It is unquestioned assumption; it is an impregnable, fixed creed; and therein I hold that it is unphilosophical. But it is really nothing else but hypothesis; it is not certainty, but supposition; it cannot justly claim to exclude all other suppositions; and now what is it?

It is that man was created in a state of absolute innocence; that he fell from that estate; that by his fall he involved his whole race in sin and misery; that he stood trial for all his posterity, and that by his failure all men were constituted sinners; that they have lost the power of recovery, all voluntary, moral power, to be good and pure; that the earth also is cursed in consequence of Adam's fall; that its elements, its products, its climate perhaps, at any rate its goodliness and beauty are changed; that the glory has passed away; in short, that nature without and nature within us, are wrenched from their original, constitutional order, and are not what God originally meant or made them to be. The world now rolls round the sun, a blasted, ruined, dark sphere, unlike any other sphere in its condition; it has lost its place in the sisterhood of happy worlds; and could any creature's eye from above look down upon the train of heavenly orbs, he

would see this to be marked, marred, and desolate; no smiling orb, no embosoming beauty and goodliness, but scathed and blackened, by the scourge and frown of infinite displeasure. For this accursed globe, in this awful emergency, the hypothesis proceeds to state, that a grand expedient was found, a great plan of redemption was devised. It was devised in heaven. Earth could never have found it out. Nor angel nor archangel could ever have seen or imagined it. There was counsel taken in heaven for the salvation of the world; for the recovery of man. I know of no good reason, I repeat, why this word, counsel, should be objected to; there were thoughts, designs, purposes to that end. God, the Father, determined to send God, the Son, into the world. In due time, he came; the Sent, and not the Sender, came into the world; he lived among men, for thirty years and more; and at length, he who was very God and very man, died upon the cross. By thus doing, thus suffering, he removed an otherwise insuperable obstacle to the bestowment of divine mercy upon sinful men, and opened the way for their return to the merciful favour of God, and the eternal bliss of heaven.

What an hypothesis! With no irreverence, but in solemn sincerity I declare, that I have felt, while unfolding it, as if I were involved in the shadows of some old, terrific, Hindu or Druid mythology. And I firmly believe, that if this hypothesis had been this day spread before any audience in Christendom for the first time, if they had never heard of it before, they would have felt it as I do. I can hardly doubt that they would have risen upon their feet and cried out, in amazement, if not indignation, at a theory so awful and incredible.

But let us patiently consider it. I maintain then,

that it is not necessary to explain the facts; that it contradicts the facts; that it is pure assumption without any known facts to rest upon; and that it is essentially self-contradictory and altogether incredible.

Its self-contradictory character in one point I have already insisted upon, and need not repeat what I then said. It presents, in its theory of the divine Persons who took their distinct and respective parts in the work of man's redemption, ideas irreconcilably at variance with the Divine Unity. It presents further contradictions; an Almighty will, thwarted; an infinite counsel, meeting with apparently unforeseen difficulties, and obliged to resort to new and extraordinary expedients. Man was made pure, and he fell. How, I *might* ask, could purity sin? It is held to be morally impossible, impossible without divine intervention, for total depravity to put forth one right affection. How then could perfect purity sin? Did God interfere to make it sin? But to proceed with the supposition; if man, instead of being made *capable* alike of good and evil, was made constitutionally sinless, what could have been the end but to keep him so? But the fall defeated that end. Then, again, the constitution of the material world was originally established for a pure race; it was changed to meet the condition of a guilty race. If it had been foreseen that the very first man would sin, and drag down all his offspring with him, why was the world made for innocence to dwell in? It would be as if in pleasant grounds, a fair garden had been made for an animal supposed to be harmless, and then, the animal proving to be a tiger, it had been necessary to raze the grounds, to tear up the shrubs and the flowers, and to turn the garden into a prison and a lair.

Again; I say, that the theory is pure assumption,

without any known facts to rely upon. That the constitution of nature was changed, that the physical nature of man, his natural appetites and passions, were changed, is what we do not know, and is in fact a thing incredible. That the moral nature of man, imperfect by the very limitation of his powers, ignorant before experience, placed here apparently to learn by experience, liable to err by every known and conceivable element of his constitution; that this nature at its origin was in a state of angelic purity, and then fell at once into utter depravity, is what we do not know, and is, in truth, a thing unintelligible. Does any one really suppose, can he really believe, that the world, when man was created and placed upon it, was essentially otherwise than it is now; that it was not moulded of hills and valleys, and covered with herbs and flowers, and visited by heat and cold, storm and sunshine; or that man was not clothed with flesh and fleshly appetites; or that his soul was not at the beginning, weak, inexperienced, and liable to err? But it may be said that there is another class of facts to be considered; the declarations of the Bible. We receive those declarations. What are they? That man fell; that the earth was cursed in consequence; and that through sin, misery has come into the world. Can these declarations be stretched out to cover the stupendous hypothesis which has been stated? I hold that there is another hypothesis that meets and satisfies them. Suppose that man's first estate was one of comparative simplicity and purity, and this the more likely because he must have been created in an adult state; suppose that after a time he fell into gross wickedness and disorder; suppose that industry and culture declined, and the earth shot up briars and thorns, *where it* before gave herbs and fruits; and suppose, in

fine, that sin thus coming into the world, was a curse to the earth and a fountain of misery through all its ages; and does not this hypothesis answer to all the declarations of the Bible? To my mind, it does so in the most satisfactory manner.

I may add that the hypothesis which we are consid ering, is peculiarly the theologian's hypothesis. It is not, and never has been, the theory of philosophy. In all the general works that have been written on man and the constitution of man, on the philosophy of history and of the human condition, on the philosophy of mind and morals, it has always been maintained that man and life, the world and the human constitution and condition, are such as God wisely made and intended them to be, for the general progress and improvement of the human race. In this respect, the prevailing theology stands directly confronted and at open war with philosophy. And hence it is that philosophy has been, to so considerable an extent, infidel; conceiving, as it naturally has done, that the prevailing theology was the true Bible philosophy. Hence a remarkable French writer* has lately gone to the insane length of maintaining that the true philosophical tendency of thought is to the utter subversion of all religion, and in fact to absolute, blank, desolating atheism. Is it not time to consider where the theological hypothesis is leading?

But to proceed: I maintain, in the third place, that that hypothesis *contradicts* the facts which it proposes to explain. It contradicts the fact of natural goodness in man. And it contradicts the fact of moral freedom. These denials, we may observe, are closely bound together, and mutually dependent on each other. If man is totally depraved, he can have no freedom to be

* Auguste Comte.

good. If he has no freedom to be good he is indeed totally and hopelessly depraved.

The leading tendency if not object, of the celebrated work of Jonathan Edwards on the Will, is to prove that man, in his natural state, has no power, no liberty to be good. Now, on the ground that man is totally depraved his position is impregnable; his argument is triumphant. And the reason is this: goodness, strictly speaking, is not an object of will. It is not within the province of the will. I can no more will virtue to be lovely to me; that is, I can no more will to love it; than I can will honey to be sweet, or sweetness to be agreeable to my taste, and to love it. If there is not a love of virtue, as of sweetness, in the very constitution of my nature, I have no power to love it. What, then, is the province of the will? It is distinctly this: to direct certain actions of my body, and the attention of my mind. The latter is the only point for consideration here; for we are not speaking of the visible action of virtue, which is only the image of inward virtue. What, then, can I do to awaken in myself good and virtuous emotion, to awaken love? I cannot will them into existence any more than I can will the love of music or of nature into existence. But this I can do; this is within the province of the will. I can *will* and *give attention* to them. I can think of the objects that should awaken good emotions. I can meditate and pray. Thus, if I have some natural good emotions, and the ability to cultivate them, I have the power to be good; and no otherwise. I *have* both.

But this the hypothesis denies. It denies that we have naturally any right feelings. And it ought, in consequence, to deny, and it does usually deny that we have any power whatever to bring them into exist-

ence. And in so doing, I say, it contradicts the foundation facts of our nature; facts on which all religion and morality repose; facts without which the Bible is an enigma, and without which I humbly and reverently say, that, to my apprehension, the government of heaven would be the most awful and terrific injustice. For the hypothesis involves to my mind, this farther, astounding, paralyzing contradiction; that we are commanded, on pain of hell, on pain of God's displeasure, on pain of unending guilt and misery, to do that which we have no power to do; to feel that which we have no power to feel; to achieve that which we have no power to achieve.

Nor, in fine, is this hypothesis necessary to explain the facts of our nature and condition. It is imagined that the fact of sin implies some tremendous catastrophe like the fall; that the origin of evil is embosomed, a dark secret, in some cloud of mystery or wrath; that the miseries of the world prove it to have been wrenched away from the fair universe of God. But the assumption, I conceive, is altogether gratuitous and uncalled-for. It is in the very *nature* of a moral and imperfect being to err; not to sin wilfully, malignantly; that is not necessary; but to err, through ignorance and impulse, to fall into excess or defect, and so to fall into sin. And it is in the *power* of such a being to sin intentionally. Man has done both. And misery has followed as the consequence at once, and corrective of his errors. Where, now, is the mystery or difficulty? Where is the need of any extraordinary hypothesis, implying the subversion or change of the original plan, or the devising of expedients to meet an unnatural or unforeseen crisis? I will venture to say, in dissent from the common opinion, and at the risk of being thought not to under-

stand the difficulties of the case, that "the origin of evil" presents no dark or mysterious problem. To my mind, it is clear and of easy solution. That is to say, it is clear as to the principle; though there are difficulties as to the details. And the solution, as I have already implied, is this. An imperfect, free, moral nature is, in its essential constitution—is, by definition, peccable; it is liable to err; and its erring is nothing strange nor mysterious. The notion of untempted innocence for such a being, is, I hold, a dream of Theology. His very improvement, his very progress, ever implies previous erring. And that from his erring, misery should come; this is equally intelligible. Now the *extent* to which these evils go, not the *origin* of them; this is doubtless a problem that I cannot solve. There are shadows upon the world that we cannot penetrate; masses of sin and misery that overwhelm us with wonder and awe; but the world-problem itself is not involved in those shadows. The principle of the case is clear, and needs not the theological hypothesis to relieve it from difficulty; not to say that the relief were stranger and harder to receive than the difficulty.

The Redemption of man, then, as I understand it, proceeds on this ground and in this wise. Man is placed upon the earth, with a nature, moral, improveable, immortal; capable of good, exposed to evil; in temptation and suffering, in need and peril; and all this mingled too with joy and hope. His being is a good gift; his life is a good opportunity. It is the highest gift and glory in the universe, to be capable of virtue, of purity, of the blessed love and likeness of God. A field for such attainment, is spread here upon earth; a school is opened, filled with incessant, instant, *sublime* instructions. But the school is not for the idle

The field is not the field of the sluggard. Through toil and struggle, through disaster and sorrow, with blessed affections too, and hopes and forctastes of heaven, man must rise.

Now the doctrine of Redemption of which this is the basis—the doctrine of Redemption is, that God, our Maker, hath had compassion upon us and hath interposed for our welfare; that he, the Infinite One, whose presence is in every world and with every creature, hath manifested that presence in miracles, and in mercies; in miracles divine, in mercies unspeakable. What creed can be more to me than this; that God pities me; that God careth for me; and that to me, a wanderer from his presence and love, he hath sent forth his Son, "to bring me nigh to him!" Nigh to Him! shelter, protection, peace, joy, blessedness; all, and more than all that words can utter, is summed up in this. The bright realm of heaven that overwhelmed me with its awful majesty, melts and dissolves in dews of mercy upon my thirsting and fainting nature.

Redemption—this is the grandeur of the world. All the majesty of earthly empires sinks to nothing before this kingdom of God, this reign of heaven upon earth! Oh! to what noble end, serve all our cares and labours and studies but to build up this kingdom; to build it up in our hearts and homes; to build it up in the city and the wilderness; to build it up in all lands, and among all nations? To what other end were appointed all our bitter sorrows? What means all the wearying and wearing conflict of human affairs and interests; with sickness and pain and grief and death to teach us—what means it but this; that out of the infinite strife and eternal vicissitude, should rise immortal virtue and purity?

To see redeemed men walking upon earth; the chains fallen, the step free, the brow lifted to heaven: to see redeemed men, changed into the image of God, touched by his spirit, won by the loveliness of Christ—won to love and patience and self-sacrifice—this is a vision compared with which all other visions fade away.

It is coming! it shall come! It hath been, and shall be yet more. Yes; the world shall yet more bear the impress of this glorious work! "An highway shall there be upon it, and a way; and it shall be called, a way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon; it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

ON THE CALVINISTIC VIEWS OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY.*

THIS is the very book which we have long wished to see. For we have long been convinced that there is a question connected with the Calvinistic controversy, more important than all others, going beyond all others, and that is nothing less than a question about the essential principles and grounds of right and wrong. What *is* rectitude? And how are we to arrive at the knowledge of it? These are the questions, which Dr. Wardlaw has undertaken to discuss in the work before us. And what now, do our readers suppose, is the legitimate theory of Calvinism on the subject of morals? Why, truly, that human nature, which has always been supposed to be both the subject of moral philosophy and its investigator, is neither one nor the other; that it neither furnishes the *facts* on which a just theory of morals can be built up, nor contains the *power* that is able to discriminate among any facts, so as to arrive at a safe conclusion. Human nature is totally depraved; therefore it furnishes no data for a moral theory. Its very conscience is perverted; the very labours of conscience in its own appropriate sphere, that of moral philosophy, have resulted in error; and in such serious, wide-spread, universal error, that it cannot be trusted, as a principle to decide between

* Review of "Christian Ethics, or Moral Philosophy on the Principle of Divine Revelation. By Ralph Wardlaw, D.D. With an Introductory Essay, by Leonard Woods, D.D."

right and wrong. "It is preposterous," says Dr. Wardlaw, "to commit the decision of an inquiry respecting the true principles of moral rectitude, to a creature subject to all the blinding and perverting influences of moral pravity."

Such is, substantially, Dr. Wardlaw's theory, though his adherence to it is not quite so unflinching as we had expected to find it. He admits that there is some dim light of conscience left in human nature. But that light is put out by a single consideration, to which we beg our readers to attend with us for one moment. The Calvinistic doctrine, be it remembered, is, that mankind are totally depraved, that human nature, in its ordinary state and in the mass of mankind, is not a mixture of good and evil, but that it is unmixed evil; that there is *nothing truly* good in it. Now it is notorious, that men in all ages and among all nations, have been accustomed to make, what they have called, moral discriminations; to pronounce some things bad, and other things good, in the character of their fellow beings. But this judgment, according to the Calvinistic theory, has been a total mistake. Conscience has been as much depraved as any other part of human nature. It has been worse than an unsafe or defective guide; it has been the grand arch-deceiver of the world; leading mankind in all ages to suppose there was good, where there really was no good whatsoever.

It will be perceived that we use the word *conscience* here for the faculty of moral discrimination in general, though that word is usually restricted in its application, so as to designate only the judgments, we pronounce upon ourselves. The power, however, which morally discriminates good from evil, must be essentially the same, whether it is applied to ourselves or others. But *now*, we repeat, according to the Calvinistic theory,

this moral discrimination is utterly at fault; it is entitled to no confidence whatever. Its judgment about right and wrong is a mere pretence, a mere farce. Its very use of terms, its very nomenclature, has been a succession of blunders from the creation of the world to this day. There is really no such thing as right and wrong among the *mass* of mankind. All is wrong, and nothing but wrong. The moral, the religious complexion of human nature is nothing but black; and the eye, that has fancied it saw white spots and various intermingled hues, has been totally deceived. And after ten thousands and millions of such mistakes, that eye, the moral eye in man, is not to be trusted at all.

Now moral philosophy, in utter disregard of these remonstrances of Calvinism, has built up its theories on the basis of human nature. It has taken, analyzed, and classified the facts of human nature,—that is to say, human feelings, passions, desires; it has pronounced some things in human nature to be right; it has held itself competent to decide *which* are right and *which* are wrong, and thus to establish principles of duty, to show that some things ought to be done, and others avoided. But here Calvinism and moral philosophy are at issue. And it is the object of the first part of Dr. Wardlaw's work to plead the cause of Calvinism against all the systems of moral philosophy in the world. He passes them in review, the systems of Aristotle, of Zeno, and of Epicurus, and the modern ones of Cudworth, Adam Smith, Dr. Hutcheson, Dr. Brown, Hume, and Bishop Butler; and, because they have not recognized the Calvinistic view of human depravity, he pronounces them essentially defective and wrong

It is not our intention to follow Dr. Wardlaw through

the several parts of his work. We are at too great a distance from him, to make it a question of much interest here, whether or not he has done himself credit as a philosopher or as a reasoner. Our chief business is with the main question, Whether the doctrine of total depravity is to overthrow all our moral theories, and to unsettle the very grounds of moral truth. But we cannot help observing, that Dr. Wardlaw seems to us to have been neither steady to his main point, nor just to the systems he attacks, nor very discriminating with regard to those claims of the Bible which he undertakes to set up. *If* human nature be totally depraved, then, indeed, the moral theories are *all* wrong, *totally* wrong. This main point and the main inference, the writer should have steadfastly adhered to, or, as it seems to us, he should not have written this book. That is to say, he should not have written a book of such violent and wholesale attack upon all former moral writers; because the moment he quits the positions above stated, he steps upon the very ground, which these writers themselves occupy. In consistency, there should be none of these qualifying phrases, "in a measure," "to a certain degree," so freely scattered up and down in this book, none of these loop-holes of escape from the theory, none of these old Calvinistic practices of asserting much in the body of the discourse and denying it in the "improvement;" since these qualifications, or any qualifications, instantly carry the Calvinistic philosopher upon the very ground which he opposes and contemns. For all moral philosophers have admitted that there is much wrong and evil in human nature, and much liability to error in the human conscience; else why should they labour to set up a true and right standard? And herein it is; *that* we think Dr. Wardlaw has not been just to them.

He treats them as if he supposed they had taken the *whole* of human nature in its present condition, *as their standard;* than which nothing can be more untrue. As an illustration of his meaning, he supposes a chemist to take and analyze a portion of polluted Thames-water, and to present us the result, as an account of the pure element. But see how unfair this is, and how fatal too, to the Doctor's theory. The polluted stream, of course, is human nature. But *does* the moral chemist present the whole of his analysis, as an account of moral purity? Does he incorporate all the vileness of the human affections into his theory of moral rectitude? Nothing can be farther from the truth. But, moreover, cannot the chemist find pure water in the most tainted stream? When he has analyzed a portion taken from the "sluggish river," into its component parts, can he not present to us pure water, and tell us what it is? This is what the moral examiner has done. With regard to the use of the Scriptures, in the formation of a just moral philosophy, nothing would delight us more, than to see them fairly and understandingly applied to that purpose. That they have been too much neglected by philosophers is certain. That they will contribute more than they have done, to the establishment of more and more correct moral theories, we have no doubt, and we are glad to have the public attention directed to this point. But to assert that the Scriptures are the source of our original moral conceptions, or of all our moral conceptions, is attempting to do them honour, as we hope to show, not only in defiance of reason, but in disregard of their own implied and obvious character.

After all, we cannot help asking, what truth, what one truth has Dr. Wardlaw added to the theory of morals? What one discovery has he made in this new

field of inquiry? Not one. The world has heard of no new discovery. This single fact shows how baseless are the assumptions, and how groundless are the sweeping complaints against moral philosophy, with which this book sets out.

But let us proceed to some consideration of the Calvinistic theory of moral philosophy, or, more exactly perhaps, the Calvinistic rejection of all former theories.

And, in the first place, let us consider, a little more fully, the ground which Calvinism occupies. Its position with regard to moral philosophy, Dr. Wardlaw has stated. It is not, however, with philosophy alone, that Calvinism is at war, but with all literature, with all the histories in the world, with almost all the memoirs that ever were written, and not less, with the common sense, common conversation, and common conduct of all mankind. For what is the tenor of all the literature, the poetry, the fiction, the history, the biography in the world? What are the written, the recorded thoughts of mankind, as they bear upon the point before us? What *is* all this—that is portrayed by the hands of unregenerate men, and that draws its delineations from the characters of unregenerate men? Look into these works, and you find them filled with moral pictures, pictures of good and evil. Here, indignation at vice flashes across the page of genius; there, the pencil, dipped in the dyes of heaven, portrays the glowing form of moral beauty and commends it to the admiration of the world. Here,

> "the historic muse,
> *Proud* of her treasure, marches down with it
> To latest time;"

and there, satire throws its withering glance upon fraud and meanness. Here, the orator thunders out his anathema against the tyrant and oppressor; and

there, friendship raises its monument to departed goodness, pours out its tears in eulogy and song, and bequeaths unequalled virtue to undying remembrance. "Such beneficence," is its language, "such beneficence, such excellence, such loveliness,—when shall we look upon their like again?" Well, it is all a mistake!—concerning the mass of mankind, it is all a mistake! There is no ground in human nature for these moral discriminations. *All* is wrong, *all* is evil; and what is called good is only the semblance of good. So ends the Calvinist's catechism. The same is true of the conversation and conduct of men. Their conduct, much of it, expresses confidence and love to one another. The manners of life all over the world, with however much of coldness and distrust, are nevertheless moulded by these sentiments of the heart; the approving smile, the glowing countenance, the outstretched hand, the fond embrace, are testifying all over the world, that there are qualities to be admired, that there are virtues to be loved. Conversation, too, is continually bearing witness to the same convictions. Men are everywhere speaking of one and another whom they know, as good, as excellent, as acting worthily and nobly. They are addressing to one another, in a thousand indirect forms of language, the same fervent and kind sentiments. Conversation, language, is everywhere spreading, in the breath of speech, its invisible network, and weaving the ties of affection that hold society together. And the very foundation of all this is confidence in human worth. But again we say, that Calvinism holds all this to be an entire mistake. And there is nothing on earth that is allowed to stand against this blighting judgment. You are surrounded, perhaps, with children. Their early affections, like their bright faces, are putting on a thousand

quick, and fluctuating, and beautiful expressions. You are charmed and won by their infantile simplicity and exquisite tenderness. Their very voices seem to be softened and attuned by the gentleness of their hearts. "Beautiful ones of earth!" you are ready to exclaim, "almost meet for heaven!" And the Saviour's voice answers back, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven!" It is all a mistake! says the system we are considering. In these children there is nothing really good; in the sight of the unerring Judge of right and wrong, *nothing good!* Your imagination may please itself with fancying that these are little cherubs; but the truth is—pardon the phrase for the sake of the truth—the truth is, that they are only little *devils* in the guise of cherubs! Because, if there were one particle of real holiness in these beings, if the only unerring eye saw anything really good in them, then they would be something better than totally depraved; they would be Christians, says this system,—so say not we,—they would be Christians, and in the way to heaven; but there is not in them one particle of real excellence!

But we must stop here, one moment, to consider and to answer for the thousandth time, we suppose, the only objection that is ever offered to this conclusion. "Not one particle of holiness," the defender of this system may say; "but still there is much that is amiable and excellent, in human nature; and much that is so pleasing, that it almost persuades us to call it real virtue." If we were dealing with a professed metaphysician or moral philosopher, we confess that we should hardly know how to suppress our indignation at such trifling with words, as appears in this objection. What *is* it, that is in controversy here? It is moral excellence. The question is about moral excellence, and about nothing else. It is not about what may

chance to be pleasing and agreeable to a totally depraved nature, but about what is really good,—good according to the only unerring standard. But what is the highest and most unerring standard? It is the judgment of God. Is there any thing morally good in human nature, according to that standard? The Calvinist's answer is, Nothing. Here end all questions then. To say that there is something pleasing in human nature, as there is in animals, the horse and the dog, is nothing to the purpose. To say, that there are semblances of goodness in men, is worse than saying nothing to the purpose. It is gravely putting forward an argument which can answer no end but that of self-deception. And, if we are so deceived, we ought to reform our language; we ought not to say that these *semblances* are excellent and lovely; we ought to suspect, and dread, and dislike them more than open vices; for they are more dangerous; they beguile us of all moral discrimination; they corrupt the fountain of truth in us. And, indeed, there *are* semblances of good, which are to be thus regarded; but the evasion we are considering, instead of exposing, helps to shield them. If the Calvinist only maintained that the mass of mankind is not prevailingly, habitually good, there would be no controversy. If he only said, that mankind are sadly depraved, that the highest principle of virtue, the fixed love of God, is wanting in multitudes, we should have no dispute with him. But he says that there is nothing good; not any, the least thing that is pure and holy; nothing, that by any addition or increase, can become holiness; not one solitary, momentary breathing of real virtue, ever to be found in human nature. Now, for Calvinists to admit that there is nevertheless something pleasing, grateful, charming in human nature is all

mockery. It is nothing to the purpose. We might as well be told that the human *form* is sometimes beautiful, the countenance lovely, the movement graceful. It is nothing to the purpose. The question now is, not a question of taste, but of theology. It is a question about the object, not of the imagination, but of the conscience, the moral nature. When men admire, praise, love the virtues of others, they suppose they admire, praise, love what is really, morally excellent. *Do* they so? Calvinism avers that they do not. If it admitted that there was any thing morally pure and good in what men love, that there was in human nature the least possible degree of what is pleasing to God and conformable to his law, the very basis of Calvinism would be taken away, and all its superstructure would fall to the ground. But it denies this, and therefore, we repeat, it stands confronted with the judgment of the whole world.

We return to this point, for we wish that this position of the system may be understood; we think it will be found to yield us some inference.

This, then, is the position of the system and of its defenders. A few persons, a few individuals in a community, a few thousands in the world, declare, that all the rest are totally depraved, that there is no foundation in their nature for a system of moral philosophy; no truth in the moral part of their literature; nothing but error in their conversation, so far as it touches the moral qualities of those around them. All the rest of the world denies it; not in form, perhaps, but in fact denies it. That is to say, they speak about virtue, right, goodness, as realities, and not fictions and delusions. They say habitually, and they say it not of a few elected persons, but of many beside them, "such *men* are good men, such actions are right, such quali-

ties are excellent and lovely." "No," say the few; "these things are not good, nor right, nor excellent." And when they say this they oppose the judgment of the whole human race! Ask *any* man, whether he does not love a kind action, or a merciful deed; whether his feelings do not sometimes kindle at the thought of a generous benefactor, of an excellent parent, of a good and worthy man; and he will, with all his heart, answer that they do. He would think himself a brute and a monster, if they did not. In fact, the language, the literature—we repeat—the poetry, the history of all the world, is full of testimonies to the beauty of goodness. "Nevertheless," say the few, "there is no real love of goodness in the world; none but in the hearts of the regenerate. With the exception of what is good in them, there is no real goodness in the world. What men call goodness, is not goodness; and if it were, they would not love, but hate it. God, the infinitely good and kind Being, they perfectly hate." And when the few say this, we repeat, they set themselves against the judgment of the whole world!

It is not strange then, that Calvinism should find it difficult to sustain itself in the public mind. It is not strange that its tenets, according to the experience and confession of all its advocates, should show a tendency, the moment they are let alone and left to themselves, to sink down, out of the public mind, and to be lost in the mass of opinions, so actively conflicting with them. This tendency is well understood, and universally acknowledged. There never was a city, nor village, nor hamlet in the world, where this system has been preached, that it did not sooner or later array against itself an intelligent opposition. And there never was a congregation on earth, where this system has once been preached, and has, at length, ceased to

be urged, so that men's minds were left to take the natural course of human opinion, that they did not give up, one after another, every point of it.

Nor, in taking the popular side in this controversy, do we wish to say any thing, to catch the popular ear, or to flatter the popular passions and prejudices. We admit, we more than admit, we insist, that there is much, very much, that is wrong in the world; *more* that is wrong than right, more that is evil than good. We are sensible, that there is much that is wrong in the history and current literature and moral philosophy of the world. They do not conform sufficiently to the spirit of that better Teacher, to whom it is our privilege and happiness to listen. We are quite aware, that there is much in the prevailing moral sentiments of mankind that needs to be reformed. We need not to be told, that there is error and evil and blindness in the minds of all human beings. We can go far with the Calvinists in delineations of this nature. But there is a point at which we must stop. We cannot admit that there is nothing good in human nature, no first principle to be built upon, no spark to be kindled; no foundation for moral philosophy, no foundation for moral hope.

But the point where definition and acquiescence stop, would properly be the beginning of argument. And we must beg our readers to give us a little attention, if not to argument at length, to a statement of what we conceive the argument on this subject would be. What then is rectitude, holiness, or virtue? (the name of the quality is immaterial,)—What is its origin? —What makes it to be to us the quality that it is?

This, as we have already intimated, is the material question. For it is only by setting up a peculiar definition of religion or rectitude, and then maintaining

that this peculiar quality is the product of a special divine influence, that they are able to deny the possession of every, the least degree of rectitude to the rest of mankind. From the same source, too, springs all exclusion, alienation, division.

What, then, *is* moral rectitude? We suppose that if we were to write down for answer, the words—"justice, love, pity, disinterestedness, holiness, piety, virtue" —the justness of the reply would be indisputable. But what do these words mean? The answer is, that the universal human conscience must interpret their meaning. The idea of rectitude cannot be defined but by using these or the like words. That is to say, strictly speaking, it cannot be defined at all. Reference must be made simply to the human heart. And if it be asked, again, what *gives birth* to this idea of rectitude or holiness, the answer must be, it is *the constitution of our nature;* it is God. This, in substance, is the whole amount of all that we know about rectitude; of all that any body knows about it; and it proves, beyond all doubt, that the Calvinistic assumption is forbidden by the universal conscience and conviction.

To illustrate this, suppose a class of theorists were to arise, and to call in question all the received ideas of philosophy, science and taste. Suppose they should say, "*We* have *another* idea of truth, of nature, of beauty; we repudiate and reject not only all your theories, but all your fundamental ideas on these subjects." What would be the answer. "You cannot;" all men would say—"you cannot; unless you maintain that the universal human reason is irrational; and that all received truth is falsehood. You cannot, unless you claim an illumination from heaven in matters of philosophy, science and taste, that distinguishes you from all other men. And if you do, we know of no

clearer definition of *fanaticism* than your opinion presents."

In fact, if any one will tell us why certain melodies, colours and forms, or why certain axioms and "first truths" are agreeable to us; we will tell him why certain moral qualities are so. The only answer is that our nature is constituted to find them so. *It is so;* and that is all we know—all we can say about it. Philosophy has been always asking for this *why;* but it is in vain. We once thought ourselves, that we had pushed definition to its ultimate point, and come to the truth in its last analysis, by saying that the primary idea of rectitude is love, benevolence, the desire of *promoting happiness;* but we see that even this fails. *Thus* we had construed the declaration that "God is love;" and we had said,—this embraces all; this sounds the depths of all rectitude. But suppose that God were a being who had created a universe of mere animal, of mere insect happiness; and would this satisfy our idea of his perfection? No; this would be mere sympathy with mere happiness; and the noblest idea would be left out. That is the moral idea, the idea of rectitude; and for the understanding of this, we can appeal to no definition, to no reasoning, but only to the constitution of our nature.

It is in this attempt at definition that all the moral theories have failed: and yet it is well worth observing how they have all involved this *idea*, though they have been seeking something else. Let us look at them a moment in this view.

One preliminary observation will be found of special importance here. It may have been observed by the reader, that we have been careful to speak of nothing but the feeling, the sentiment of rectitude, as it exists in the mind. Now the observation is, that in this

inquiry, it is the feeling or perception alone with which we have anything to do; that we have nothing to do with the external action. The outward action is nothing but the sign of the inward perception. It is, we repeat, with the perception only that we have anything to do, when inquiring after the real origin and essential nature of virtue. If this distinction had been sufficiently considered, it would have cut off, as we think, many a wearisome and wordy disquisition upon the grounds of morality.

But to the definitions and grounds of morality. Aristotle's definition, *that virtue is the mean between extremes*, can scarcely be considered as rising to the dignity of a theory. It was a just maxim certainly, and implied, we may add, that the elementary principles of rectitude lay in the human heart, though they were liable continually to fall into one or the other of the extremes of apathy and passion, of inaction or violence. Zeno's rule of *living according to nature*, that is, the nature of the soul, implied of course, that there is a principle or perception of rectitude in the soul, which is the teacher of virtue. The doctrine of Epicurus, that *happiness is the end of our being*, and that *all virtue lies in the pursuit of happiness*, was connected by this philosopher with the admission, that, in order to obtain this happiness, one must live virtuously; an admission that at once introduces a new element into his theory, an element fatal to his theory as a theory, but the very element we contend for,—that is to say, an independent perception of virtue. *The fitness of things* of Cudworth, Clarke, and Price taught, that "the right and wrong of actions are to be regarded as ranking amongst necessary or first truths, which are discerned by the mind independently of all reasoning and evidence." The speculations of those

acute theologians, which threw a world of learned dust and scholastic mist over this first truth, still laid this truth in the heart of their system; namely, that right and wrong are things self-evident, necessary, and immutable as the axioms of the Mathematics. The celebrated "theory of moral sentiments" by Adam Smith, *the theory of moral sympathies* that is to say, involved the same original and independent principle. "I do wrong. I consider others as looking upon that wrong action and condemning it. I sympathize with their disapprobation; and thus I condemn myself. I do right; and through a similar process I learn to approve myself. It is sympathy," says the theory, in both cases. But why do we feel so *differently* in the different cases? Why does the right excite one kind of emotion, and the wrong another? Why did they, in the bosoms of the first men that experienced these emotions? The theory does not tell us. And the only answer is, that it is the constitution of our nature that makes the difference. In the same manner do we think that there is involved in the Utilitarian theory a secret reason and ground of morals, which the Utilitarian himself does not recognize. Why is an action right? Because it tends to promote the general happiness. But why is it right to promote the general happiness? Is it because happiness is a good? Yes, it is a good; but if bare tendency to promote this good, is the only thing to be considered, then a shower of rain must be a very virtuous thing. "No," it will be replied, "a being only can be virtuous. There must be an *intent* to do good; a *moral* intent,—not an intellectual contriving of the matter only; a love,—and not a love of happiness merely, our own, for instance, but a love of others' happiness." Here then, we think, is a secret truth embraced, but not recognized, in the

Utilitarian's category. A world of beings may easily be conceived of, promoting each others' happiness in the highest degree, and yet having no such moral intent, not virtuous. The world of animals *is* such a world.*

If we have succeeded in establishing the position, that the ideas of moral excellence are constitutional and belong essentially to human nature, we are prepared to advance another step in our survey of the ethics of Calvinism. For we maintain, that the idea of rectitude implies, in however small a degree, the feeling of rectitude. The Calvinist, indeed, admits that there is a conscience in all men, and we maintain that this admission is inconsistent with the alleged

* We are not sure that the theory of utility is yet set forth and defended in a manner that is very satisfactory to its most intelligent defenders. We have supposed that the theory, as laid down in the books, contented itself with saying, that an action is right because it tends to promote happiness, and there left the subject without going back to the ulterior and ultimate ground of rectitude in the case. There it seems to us to be left by Paley and Bentham. They do not seem to have considered the question, why the *feeling* of benevolence is right. If, however, the Utilitarian should say, that he *assumes* the feeling to be right, and only differs from us in analyzing and resolving all virtue into that feeling, we should have no quarrel with the *principle* of his philosophy, though we should doubt about his conclusion. Whether all rectitude can be analyzed into benevolence, we doubt But if the Utilitarian says, that a benevolent feeling is right *because* it tends to promote happiness, if he says that happiness is so excellent a thing that it confers upon its promoter, virtue, all the charm which invests it, we must dissent altogether. Benevolence makes me happy, makes others happy. Is that the reason why it is beautiful? It would be, to sell virtue in the market-place! Happiness is an excellent thing. But it is not half so excellent a thing as virtue. Yet this theory would make happiness the nobler thing, since it is offered as the very ground and reason, why the virtue that promotes it is excellent. We can admire the merciful man, when he is merciful to his *beast*, when he takes care only for the happiness of animals; but can animal happiness confer upon the quality of mercy all its beauty and worth?

universal and total depravity of men. We expect that, in answer to this, it will be said, at once, that although all men have a conscience and approve of what is good, that is a very different thing from loving it.

Undoubtedly it is a very different thing from loving it habitually, or with predominant affection. But the question is, whether the approbation of goodness does not imply the previous existence, not of a habit, but of a feeling of goodness. You behold a man doing a good action. Now, it is not the bare outward action that you admire, the stretching out of the hand, and that hand filled with gold; but it is the generous feeling, the feeling of kindness or pity in the heart of the giver. And how could you know any thing of this feeling in his heart, unless you had experienced something of it in your own heart? We do not see how otherwise you could know it. The feeling is not visible. You do not with your bodily eyes see it. But you know that it is in your neighbour's heart, when he is sincerely doing a kind action; and you know it from sympathy; you know it because you feel with him, or have, at some former time, felt as he does. In short, you know nothing, and can know nothing, about any mental qualities and exercises, but by experience of them. And as you know what memory is only by remembering, or what reason is only by reasoning, so do you know what a virtuous or holy exercise in the mind is, only by feeling it.

Conscience is not only a judgment, but it is a feeling. It is the same soul acting, with greater or less energy, upon moral objects. The difference between conscience (as that word is commonly used) and moral feeling, is a difference, not in kind but in degree. It may be a cold approbation; it may be a warm emotion; but still it is the same thing. We perceive the

difference between right and wrong. We feel the difference between right and wrong. Here is the same thing. We feel this more or less strongly. Here is all the difference. When we witness a simple act of justice, as the paying of a debt, we simply approve it. When we witness an act of great, generous, and even self-denying benevolence, we warmly approve it. In both cases, it is, in its nature, the same action of the soul, put forth with greater or less energy.

But, it may be said, are not conscience and feeling often directly opposed to each other? May not the conscience be right when the feeling is wrong? Is not this especially the case in envy? A man approves, it will be said, the excellence that he hates; his conscience perceives a virtue, to which his heart is opposed. Undoubtedly the feeling of conscience may be overborne by other feelings; but this does not prove it to be any the less a feeling, and, so far as it goes, a right feeling. There is no difficulty here. It is just as filial affection may be overborne by the love of worldly pleasure, or evil company. All we say, in this case, is, that the filial affection is the weaker feeling. And, if this feeling should strengthen and gain the predominance, we should not say, that it was changed in its nature, but only, that it was increased in power. And so the weak conscience, when it becomes a strong principle, when it becomes the habitual love of God and good beings, is yet the same conscience increased in vigour. It has passed through a change, not of nature but of degree. It is the same single, solemn homage of human nature to what is right and good.

And let me add, that the perception of moral rectitude needs to be something thus simple, clear, and unquestionable. It must not be dependent on any abstruse reasoning. It must not depend on this or

that man's peculiar theory. It must not require that men should ascend into heaven, or go beyond the sea, to find it out. It must not leave any one cause to inquire anxiously, "wherewith he shall come before the Lord." It is too essential a matter, it is too vital an interest, to be the subject of any reasonable doubt as to *what* it is. It must be like the light of the sun, shed clearly and brightly upon every human eye. That which is food to the soul, must be certain to the taste. That which is life to the soul, must be manifest to simple consciousness. That in which all safety, all good, all happiness essentially consists, must be self-evident, indisputable, universal truth; truth without a shadow, without a question, without the possibility of a mistake.

We should be glad if we had space, now to consider the bearing of this discussion upon several subjects: upon the identity of true morality and true religion; upon the way of becoming good and religious, or what it is to become so; upon the unreasonableness of intolerance; and upon the light in which the guidance of Scripture is to be regarded. But we must hope that the application to these topics, of what we have been saying, is sufficiently obvious; and we will close our objections to Calvinism by asking one question. What sort of practical ethics would follow from this system? What sort of position, theoretically speaking, would its votary occupy in life, in society, in the world?

Himself pure, while the multitude around him is totally depraved; himself growing better while they are daily growing worse; himself elected, sanctified, redeemed, while, for them, no electing mercy, no sanctifying spirit, no redeeming blood has yet interposed to bring them into the fold of safety; himself hoping for heaven, while they, dying such as they live, are cer-

tainly doomed to hell, nay, are every year and day, sinking by thousands, from the fair and smiling abodes of life, into everlasting burnings; what manner of man ought he to be? We do not ask what ideas of God must result from this view of the mass of mankind as a body of unreclaimed and almost irreclaimable convicts, from this view of the earth as a vast penitentiary; but we ask, what sort of person should he be, who dwells in such a penitentiary?

Certainly, he should be filled with inexpressible sadness. He may rejoice in his own escape; but, for the thousands and millions, who never have escaped, and who never shall escape, he ought to feel a sadness, amounting to gloom and horror. If he lived in a city of a million of inhabitants, and knew that they were all, in one season, to be swept away by a pestilence; that all were to die, excepting a remnant of a few hundreds with himself, could he, contemplating only that death and temporal desolation; could he walk cheerfully in the streets of that city? But what is this to that doom, beneath which millions of the human race are, every year, sinking to woes and agonies, untold, unutterable, and never to end! Can joy be any part of a system like this? Can a man ever smile, who has taken this contemplation of things to his heart? Can he see any real sign of cheerfulness in the heavens or the earth? Can the song of the neighbouring groves, can the shouts of laughter from yonder playground, or the swelling of gay and glad music upon the breeze, be any thing but the most bitter mockery? What are all these, to the mass of mankind, but the prelude to groans, and lamentations, and wailings of sorrow? The very arts, under such a system, should lose all their forms of winning beauty and imposing grandeur, all their buoyancy and brightness; and

sculpture should only present us groups, like the Laocoon, writhing in the agony of fear; and painting should only draw pictures, dark and portentous, like that of the Deluge; and poetry should only pour out, in sadder numbers than the celebrated "Night Thoughts," its tears and lamentations over the mournful fate of human kind. Under the dread shadow of this system, then, what can remain to its consistent votary? What can be his ties to society at large? Can he have friendship? Can he wish for intercourse with unregenerate men, bad men, utterly bad men? Why should he? What is there in them to love? If he must be connected with them, by business or kindred, yet what are these *circumstances*, compared with the great features of moral relationship? And the moral relationship on the part of the regenerate, can be nothing but that of superiority, and pity, and prayer; not that of friendship.

Can human nature,—can human life,—can human society, bear such a system as this? Burthened in spirit, saddened with many afflictions, struggling with many difficulties, scarcely sustaining itself with all the aids of the most cheering faith, how must the human heart sink under this universal cloud of darkness, horror and despair! How could any liberal acquisitions, any graceful accomplishments, any joyous virtues, or generous confidences, spring up under such an appalling, all-absorbing dispensation of threatening, wrath and woe? It has been said, we know, with an air of much self-complacency, that our anti-Calvinistic system, that Unitarianism, in other words, is essentially a shallow, superficial system even for the intellect; that it is a system, altogether unfavourable to a generous and thorough improvement; that genius encompassed by that system, walks in fetters. But

what, we should like to ask, has Calvinism done, that its defenders should be entitled to adopt this tone of contempt for its adversaries? We ask not, what *Calvinists* have done. For, allowing individuals among them all deserved credit for genius and accomplishments, it is very remarkable, that in the exertion of their powers in the chosen departments of genius, they have proved traitors to their system! That is to say, the tone of religious thought and sentiment introduced into such works has never been that of Calvinism. We ask, then, What has Calvinism done? What literature has ever breathed its spirit, or ever will? What poem has it written—but Mr. Pollok's "Course of Time?" What philosophy—but Dr. Wardlaw's? Into what meditations of genius or reveries of imagination, but those of John Bunyan, has it ever breathed its soul?

We say not this reproachfully, but in self-defence. But we do say, that a system, which has never appeared in any recognized delineations of the true and beautiful; which never comes into that department even with those who profess to hold it in theory; which dwells not with men in their happy hours, by their firesides, and among their children; which wears no form of beauty that ever art or imagination devised, but hangs, rather, as a dark and antiquated hatchment on the wall, the emblem of life passed away; and we do say, too, that a system whose frowning features the world cannot and will not endure; whose theoretical inhumanity and inhospitality few of its advocates can ever learn; whose tenets are not, as all tenets should be, better, but worse, a thousand times worse, than the men who embrace them; whose principles falsify all history and all experience, and throw dishonour upon all earthly heroism and magnanimity; whose teach-

ings warrant no hopes, comfort nor afflictions, soothe no sorrows, but of an elected few; and whose dread messages ought to make the sympathies of those few to be tortures and agonies to them, while they bind in chains the rest of mankind, and hold them reserved for blackness and darkness for ever; we do say that such a system cannot be true! It may be a sort of theory to be speculated about, to be coldly believed in, but it is not truth, that can be taken home to the heart. "*Coldly* believed in,"—did we say. No; *so* believed, it is not believed in at all. It is *not* believed, unless it is believed in horror and anguish; unless it sends its votary to his nightly pillow in tears, and wakes him every morning to sorrow, and carries him through every day, burthened as with a world's calamity, and hurries him, worn out with apprehension and pity, to a premature grave! He who should grow sleek and fat, and look fair and bright, in a prison, from which his companions were taken one by one, day by day, to the scaffold and the gibbet, could make a far, far better plea for himself, than a good man living and thriving in this dungeon-world, and believing that thousands and thousands of his fellow prisoners, are dropping daily into everlasting burnings. Once more then, we say, that this system cannot be proved to be true, till nature and life and consciousness are all proved to be false; till the ties of affection are proved to be all snares, and its sympathies all sorrows; till the tenor of life is proved to be a tissue of lies, and the beneficence of nature all mockery, and the dictates of humanity all dreams and delusions!